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Austronesian syntax^{1*}

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1. Introduction

This chapter presents an overview of major syntactic issues in the analysis of Austronesian languages, with particular focus on Oceanic languages. Certain typologically unusual aspects of syntactic design are known to recur in the different groupings within the Austronesian family, and each raises interesting theoretical questions from both Austronesian-internal perspectives and general theoretical perspectives. The phenomena include widespread predicate-first (verb-first or head-initial) word order, articulated voice systems, strict extraction restrictions, and articulated systems of possession marking. We hope to give a sense of the empirical picture and the theoretical issues that they raise, as well as address several other fundamental aspects of Austronesian syntactic structure. This survey is not intended to be comprehensive. We by no means want to claim full coverage of either languages or phenomena, nor will we be able to offer a definitive analysis of particular phenomena. Rather, we have tried to select the topics that are particularly relevant for Austronesian languages and at the same time present theoretical challenges that are of interest to linguists who work outside Austronesian. In doing so, we often identify competing analyses which need to be refined or explored further. For a comprehensive survey of Austronesian languages, see Blust (2013), and for an overview of Austronesian morphology, see Levin and Polinsky (2019).

The structure of this chapter is as follows. Section 2 presents and analyzes the syntax of predicate-initial orders in Austronesian, with an emphasis on proposals for deriving such a word order. Section 3 discusses the structure of noun phrases and some syntactic issues that have emerged in their investigation. Section 4 introduces the morphosyntax of several verbal categories, including agreement, voice, and verb serialization. Section 5 addresses main types of case-marking patterns in Austronesian and surveys major proposals regarding the origins of the ergative vs. accusative alignment in these languages. Section 6 discusses the subject-only restriction prominent in Austronesian languages. Section 7 introduces several other phenomena that have stimulated research on Austronesian syntax: binding, questions, negation, and comparatives, as well as control, raising, and restructuring infinitives.

2. Verb-first word order

Austronesian languages are head-initial, and many Austronesian languages—including languages spoken at the geographical extremes of the family—are verb-initial or predicate-initial, i.e., VSO or VOS. In other Austronesian languages, the neutral word order is SVO or verb-medial; this order is represented in several Formosan languages, various Indonesian-type languages, Micronesian languages, and a subset of Melanesian languages. With the exception of some Western Melanesian languages that have long been in contact with Papuan languages and have developed verb-final orders, including postpositions (Donohue 2007; Lynch, Ross, and Crowley 2002: 41, 49-50, 87; Crowley 2002: 37; Lichtenberk 1983b), no other word order types are considered basic within the family.²

Verb-initial languages have long been of interest to typologists, in part because they are infrequent but not rare, representing roughly one fifth of the world's languages (van Everbroeck 2003). Verb-initial languages seem to fall into roughly two classes: those in which verbs are distinguished among predicate heads in appearing initially, and those in which verb-initial word order is part of a larger predicate-initial trend in the languages. This distinction can best be seen by looking at concrete examples.

Tukang Besi (ISO 639-3 *khc* or *bhq*) is an example of a language where verbs alone can appear initially. Compare the following sentences (1a, b) where the verb appears in the clause-initial position, while the two nominal arguments may appear in either order. The non-verbal predicate cannot be fronted, as in (2a, b). The glosses are taken from the original source.

² Variation from canonical verb-first or verb-medial word orders is of course possible as a reflection of information structural variation. For example, Cheke Holo (Northwest Solomon, Solomon Islands) has neutral VSO order; however, a single preverbal topic position accounts for what appears to be SVO and OVS. Focused constituents appear in clause-final position; hence, VOS is also possible (Palmer 2009a).

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- (1) a. *no-‘ita-‘e na kene-no te ana* *Tukang Besi*
 3R-see-3OBJ NOM friend-3POSS CORE child
 ‘The child saw its friend.’
 b. *no-‘ita-‘e te ana na kene-no*
 3R-see-3OBJ CORE child NOM friend-3POSS
 ‘The child saw its friend.’ (Donohue 1999: 51)
- (2) a. *te wunua-mamo i kampo ito*
 EA house-1PA.POSS OBL village that:higher
 ‘Our house is in the village up there.’ (Donohue 1999: 57)
 b. **i kampo ito te wunua-mamo*
 OBL village that:higher CORE house-1PA.POSS
 (Mark Donohue, pers.comm.)

In contrast, Malagasy (ISO 639-3 *mlg*) is a predicate-initial language. The basic word order is VOS, which is part of a more general pattern in which the predicate is initial. This is the case for all categories of predicates (Paul and Potsdam 2012):

- (3) a. *[mividy ny akoho]_{VP} i Bao* *Malagasy*
 buy the chicken Bao
 ‘Bao is buying the chicken.’
 b. *[vorona ratsy feo]_{NP} ny goaika*
 bird bad voice the crow
 ‘The crow is a bird with an ugly voice.’
 c. *[faly amin’ ny zanany]_{AP} Raso*
 proud PREP the child.3SG Raso
 ‘Raso is proud of her children.’
 d. *[any an-tseña]_{PP} Rakoto*
 PREP ACC-market Rakoto
 ‘Rakoto is at the market.’

Niuean (ISO 639-3 *niu*), despite its basic VSO word order, is another instance of a predicate-initial language (Massam 2005). The initial position in a clause can be occupied by true predicates such as NPs, headless relative clauses, and PPs, or it can be occupied by the verb alone, followed by the subject and object. In general, VOS is not possible, which seems to indicate that verbal clauses are not predicate-initial, assuming that the verbal predicate would be the verb plus its complements. Nevertheless, a special construction that Massam (2001) calls pseudo-incorporation suggests that the lone clause-initial verb, despite not being accompanied by its dependents, is in fact the predicate. Pseudo-incorporation involves the use of a bare noun in internal argument position. This noun shares semantic properties with syntactically incorporated nouns, such as obligatory narrow scope, inability to introduce discourse referents, or number neutrality. On the other hand, pseudo-incorporated nouns have more syntactic freedom than syntactically incorporated ones (cf. Mithun 1984; Baker 1988; van Geenhoven 1998; Chung and Ladusaw 2003; Massam 2009); in particular, such nouns can be modified by some types of relative clauses. Under pseudo-incorporation, the complex predicate consists of a verb and object which cannot be separated from the verb; the object is invisible to the syntax beyond the verbal complex. The East Futunan (ISO 639-3 *fud*) example in (4) illustrates this phenomenon. In (4a), we find the canonical VSO word order. In (4b), the object loses its determiner and case and appears immediately adjacent to the verb, yielding VOS order. In verbal clauses with pseudo-noun incorporation, the word order is clearly predicate-initial.

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- (4) a. *e taki e le fafine le motokā kula* *East Futunan*
 IPFV drive ERG DET woman DET car red
 ‘The woman is driving a red car.’
 b. *e taki motokā le fafine*
 IPFV drive car DET woman
 ‘The woman drives.’ (Moyses-Faurie 1997a: 239)

The fact that the reduced object seems to constitute an initial verb phrase with the verb leads Massam and others to conclude that verbal clauses are really predicate-initial too. VSO word orders are then also predicate-initial, with the predicate consisting only of the verb. In such instances, the object has vacated the predicate in some way.

The head-initial/verb-initial nature of Austronesian languages correlates with several visible structural properties, which have been noted for head-initial languages by a number of researchers, starting with Greenberg (1963):

- (5) a. impossibility of postpositions (prepositions only)
 b. the order noun before arguments (PPs) and modifiers (adjectives, relative clauses)
 c. the order determiner-noun
 d. preverbal particles or prefixes marking tense, aspect, mood, negation
 e. inflected prepositions (Keenan 1976; Kayne 1994)
 f. lack of the verb ‘have’ and the expression of possession existentially (Freeze 1992; Freeze and Georgopoulos 2000)
 g. the order host-incorporated noun under (pseudo-)noun incorporation (Massam 2001; Kissock 2003: 150-153; Chung and Ladusaw 2003; Ball 2008)

Most Austronesian languages that have verb-initial or predicate-initial orders are characterized by the properties listed in (5). Why these characteristics pattern together is a question of theoretical and typological interest.

2.1. Deriving verb-initial word order

The primary analytical question regarding verb-initial languages is how this word order is derived structurally. Although there are a range of answers (see Potsdam 2009 and Clemens and Polinsky 2017, for a comprehensive review), we focus on two: V(erb) Raising and V(erb) P(hrase) Raising. In a V Raising analysis, the verb originates inside the verb phrase but raises to a left peripheral head position in the functional layer of the clause (see Carnie 1995, Chung and McCloskey 1987, Emonds 1980, Sproat 1985, and others), as shown in (6).

- (6) V Raising derivation of verb-initial word order
 [_{XP} V [_{Subject} [_{VP} ~~V~~ Object]]]

In some languages, crucial evidence for V Raising is supplied by ellipsis. Since everything following the verb is a constituent, ellipsis can apply, stranding the verb (McCloskey 1991; Goldberg 2005, and others).

In a VP Raising analysis, in contrast, the entire VP raises to a specifier in the functional layer of the clause (see Davies and Dubinsky 2001, Koopman and Szabolcsi 2000, Massam and Smallwood 1997, Rackowski and Travis 2000, Aldridge 2004, Chung 2006, Collins 2017, Pearson 2018 and others), as shown in (7a). In cases where less than a VP appears initially, as in VSO word order, it is hypothesized that elements move out of the VP before the VP raises, as in (7b).

- (7) VP Raising derivations of verb-initial word order
 a. [_{TP} VP [_{Subject} [_{VP} ~~V~~ Object]]]
 b. [_{TP} VP [_{Subject} [_{Object} [_{VP} ~~V~~ Object]]]]

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Chung (2005, 2006) critically evaluates the VP Raising analysis for Austronesian and discusses in detail one potential argument in its favor from extraction patterns. Assuming that VP raises to a specifier position and specifiers are islands for extraction, the raised VP ought to be an island for further extraction (see e.g. Rackowski and Travis 2000, Chung 1998, 2006, Cole and Hermon 2008, and Clemens and Polinsky 2017 for details). That is, in a VP Raising language, it ought to be impossible to extract complements and VP-internal adjuncts. This expectation reflects one of the typologically unusual extraction patterns, found mainly in Western Austronesian languages, that extraction of nominal arguments is restricted to subjects (Subject-Only Restriction). This pattern could be taken to show that VPs are islands in these languages, and hence clausal word order is indeed derived by VP Raising. At the same time, extraction patterns in individual languages are more complex and individual languages pose challenges (Sabbagh 2005; Chung 2006; Massam 2001; Cole and Hermon 2008; Hsieh 2020).

By now, there has been enough investigation of different Austronesian languages to form the basis for an in-depth comparison of these competing accounts of verb-initial order. Many of these investigations have adopted VP Raising, with or without partial evacuation of the VP (see e.g. Massam 2001 and Rackowski and Travis 2000). However, others have argued in favor of V Raising (e.g. Pearce 2002; Sabbagh 2005). We would like to emphasize here that the mechanisms for deriving verb-initial order are likely to be different for different languages (see, for example, the papers cited in Carnie, Harley, and Dooley 2005). For example, Otsuka (2005) argues in favor of employing V Raising and VP Raising for the very closely related languages Tongan (ISO 639-3 *ton*) and Niuean. It is therefore critical to establish the correct analysis for individual languages.

2.2. *Postverbal position of the subject*

The discussion up to this point might seem to suggest that nothing needs to be said about the position of the subject in verb-initial languages. Assuming that the subject remains in place, the V Raising analysis automatically accounts for the postverbal subject in VSOX clauses.

The VP Raising analysis likewise automatically describes the position of the subject in VOXS. The VP Raising analysis can also explain VSOX word order if everything but the verb vacates the VP before it fronts (Massam 2000, 2001, and others). For instance, Bauer (1993: 245) uses the latter mechanism to derive VSO word order in Māori (ISO 639-3 *mri*) from a basic VOS word order. Māori allows both VSO and VOS orders, and Bauer suggests that the underlying or basic word order is VOS, with VSO derived with extraposition of one or more complements as follows:

- (8) *ka whakareri t_ia Rewi [i ngā rama me ngā pīhuka]i Māori*
 TNS make.ready DET Rewi OBJ DET.PL torch with DET.PL hook
 ‘Rewi prepared the torches and the hooks.’ (Chung 1998: 164)

Nonetheless, investigations of clause structure in Austronesian languages have also led to other accounts of the position of the subject. Guilfoyle, Hung, and Travis (1992) account for VOXS word order in Malagasy and other Austronesian languages by placing the subject in a right specifier of TP. A number of theoretical concerns arise with this analysis. One concern is that a mechanism is required that can specify which side of the head a specifier is on. On the one hand, this is necessary to distinguish languages from each other. For example, English specifiers are uniformly on the left but Malagasy specifiers—subject and possessors—are on the right. On the other hand, it is also necessary to distinguish specifiers of particular phrases within a single language. To take two examples, Aissen (1992, 1996) proposes that in the Mayan language Tzotzil (ISO 639-3 *tzo*), specifiers of high functional projections are on the left but specifiers for lower, lexical projections are on the right. Tzotzil would have a right-hand specifier for the projection housing the subject given its basic word order, but *wh*-phrases front to a clause-initial position, indicating that the specifier of CP is on the left.

Finally, Chung (1998, 2004) and Sabbagh (2005) handle the flexible verb-first word order of Māori, Chamorro, and Tagalog (ISO 639-3 *tgl*) by proposing that the subject can lower to right-adjoin to some projection of V. Lowering is posited to account for the fact that, in these languages, the subject can occur immediately to the right

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of any V head of a coordinate VP, including the V of a right VP conjunct, as is illustrated in the following Chamorro (ISO 639-3 *cha*) examples.

- (9) a. [mu-ma'a'ñao i säkki] ya [ha-yutu' i salappi] Chamorro
 AGR-afraid DET thief and.then AGR-drop DET money
 'The thief got scared and dropped the money.' (Chung 1998: 134)
- b. [humanao]ya [ha-po'lu i balutan-ña i ma'estru
 AGR.go and.then AGR-put DET bundle-AGR DET teacher
 gi'istanti]
 LOC shelf
 'The teacher went and put his bundle on the shelf.' (Chung 1998: 138)

This extreme flexibility in the position of the subject receives an explanation if the following assumptions are made: (a) coordinate structures are fully projected from all of the conjuncts, and (b) the subject lowers and adjoins on the right in any of the conjuncts (Chung 1998: 138). The evidence that the subject does not originate in the lower position but rather, starts out as the righthand specifier of the highest inflectional head, comes from its interaction with negation; unlike all other arguments, the subject is outside the scope of negation regardless of its linear position (Chung 1998: Ch. 4).

It is important to recognize the interaction between the accounts of verb-initial word order and the positioning of the subject. VSO and VOS word orders do not simultaneously require mechanisms that move the verb leftward (V and VP Raising) and the subject rightward (a right-hand specifier or subject lowering), although there may be empirical reasons for doing so. Hopefully, more systematic empirical investigation of Austronesian clause structure will help restrict the choices and availability of analytical options.

2.3. Do Austronesian languages have verbs and other lexical classes?

A related issue in the study of Austronesian languages is the existence or absence of lexical categories (Broschart 1997; Tchekhoff 1981; Kroeger 2004; Gil 2004, 2005, 2009; Kaufman 2009, 2017; Kaufman et al. 2026). From a diachronic standpoint, it is hypothesized that a lack of lexical categories gives rise to verb-initial word order in the following manner: thematic nominalizations, which occur as internal arguments of a silent verb 'BE', 'OCCUR' or 'EXIST', are reanalyzed as event predications (Clark 1976; Starosta, Pawley, and Reid 1982; Kaufman 2009; Ross 2009, a.o.). The nominalizations themselves are head-initial, in accordance with the strong head-initial character of Austronesian, which explains why the verb appears first. Thus, schematically, the transition is from (10a) to (10b) (English lexical items are used for illustration):

- (10) a. EXIST [_{XP} address(ing) by the chief of the people]
 b. [_{TP} address the chief the people]

An alternative view is that lexical categories are well-developed in Austronesian languages but that there are a fair number of silent inflectional elements, and lexical classes are thus related by zero conversion in morphology (Himmelman 2005: 18-131). Not surprisingly, Austronesian linguists who study Oceanic languages, which are known for their impoverished morphology, lean toward the former view; Austronesian linguists who study Philippine-type languages, whose morphology is richer, lean toward the latter view. For example, Sabbagh (2005) explores a number of morphosyntactic diagnostics in Tagalog, which distinguish verbs from adjectives and unaccusative adjectives from unergative adjectives. Similarly, Richards (2009), Aldridge (2009) and Hsieh (2019) raise concerns about Kaufman's (2009) nominalism hypothesis drawing on a detailed investigation of lexical categories in Tagalog and Seediq (ISO 639-3 *trv*), showing that a noun/verb distinction is present in both languages. In two detailed investigations of Māori, Bauer (1997) and Yamada (2014) both show that the categories noun, verb, and adjective may be less visible than in richer inflectional languages but that their existence is quite clear from the

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standpoint of their syntactic distribution. Likewise, Chung (2012) argues for a well-articulated set of lexical categories in Chamorro. In Chamorro, as in many other Austronesian languages, “the same word” often “function[s] as a noun, a verb, and an adjective according to the traditional definitions of these grammatical terms” (Topping and Dungca 1973: 77). Furthermore, “reversals” of predicate and argument are possible, cf. (11a) where ‘sleep’ is the predicate, ‘child’ is the argument, and (11b) the functions are reversed:

- (11) a. *mamaigu’ i i pätgun* *Chamorro*
 sleep.PROG DET child
 ‘The child is sleeping.’
 b. *pätgun i mamaigu’*
 child DET sleep.PROG
 ‘The one sleeping is a child.’

However, although a large set of lexical categories can occur in the predicate position, only predicates that are lexically specified as verbs and adjectives can show agreement with the subject; predicates that are lexically specified as nouns do not agree with the subject in person and number. Only nouns can combine with the prefix *gai-* to form a verb meaning ‘have N’; e.g., *gai-patgun* ‘have a child’ but **gai-malati*’ (intended ‘have smarts’). Verbal predicates differ from nominal and adjectival predicates in their co-occurrence with bare subjects (Chung 2012). Finally, only nouns can combine with numerals, only verbs and prepositions can take a direct object, and only adjectives can combine with degree words (see also Pearson 2010a for Fijian)—distributional patterns well attested in more familiar languages. Crucially, the size of the adjectival class should not be of concern: it is quite possible that a language may have very few adjectives (Chung 2012). To take an extreme case, Lichtenberk (2005a) suggests that Toqbaqita may have just one adjective, however, that is enough to claim that the category still exists.

Within Oceanic, this issue arises in a limited domain: does the category adjective exist in these languages, or are all adjectives actually stative verbs (cf. Harrison and Albert 1976 on Mokilese (ISO 639-3 *mkj*); Willson 2002 on Marshallese (ISO 639-3 *mah*); Hyslop 2001, 2004 on North-East Ambae (ISO 639-3 *omb*); Ross 1998 on the reconstruction of an adjectival category to Proto-Oceanic; van Lier 2016 for a comparative approach across Oceanic languages)? The main argument against positing a class of adjectives comes from the ability of such “adjectives” to combine directly with tense and agreement morphology, which would qualify them as verbs on the assumption that tense and aspect morphology only combines with verbs.

3. Structure of the noun phrase

Compared to clausal syntax, the syntax of noun phrases has received relatively less attention. In this section we survey some of the issues particular to nominal syntax in Austronesian and suggest how they might inform syntactic theory.

3.1. Noun types

Nouns in Austronesian languages generally fall into three different types: common nouns, proper nouns, and locative nouns (Ross 2006; Blust 2015). Each type co-occurs with different determiners, and the difference may also be reflected in a difference in the prepositions and case markers that the noun takes. Locative nouns include conventional place names and expressions such as ‘beach’, ‘inland/bush’, ‘home’.³ The following illustrate the three classes in Fijian:

³ As noted in Blust (1989, 2005, 2015), locative nouns often occur in their citation forms with an attached locative marker, e.g., Mokilese *nehn loangge* ‘Heaven’ (= *nehn* ‘in, on, inside’ + *loang* ‘sky’)—so called “adhesive locative” in Blust’s terminology. Although adhesive locatives are poorly understood synchronically or diachronically, they are widespread across Austronesian languages.

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- (12) a. proper nouns *Fijian*
 'o/*na Taina
 DET Taina
 b. common nouns
 na/*'o yacana
 DET book
 c. local nouns
 Suva/*na Suva/*'o Suva

The class of proper nouns includes personal names, some kinship terms, and typically the interrogative pronoun 'who'. Like proper nouns, 'who' often co-occurs with proper name determiners (12), cannot serve as the pivot of an existential,⁴ and cannot undergo pseudo-noun incorporation (15c). It stands in contrast to common nouns and 'what', which, as the Tongan example in (14c) shows, can undergo pseudo-noun incorporation.

- (13) a. 'o/*na cei e a savata na i sulu? *Fijian*
 DET who 3SG PAST wash DET NMLZ clothes
 'Who washed the clothes?'
 b. na/*'o cava e a kania 'o Jone?
 DET what 3SG PAST eat DET John
 'What did John eat?'

 (14) a. na'e inu 'a e koke 'e Sione *Tongan*
 PAST drink ABS DET soda ERG John
 'John drank a/the coke.'
 b. na'e inu koke 'a Sione?
 PAST drink soda ABS J
 'John drink soda.'
 c. na'e inu hā 'a Sione?
 PAST drink what ABS J
 'What did John drink?' (Incorporated wh)

 (15) a. na'e fakamavahevahe'i 'e he tu'i 'a e *Tongan*
 PAST separate ERG DET chief ABS DET
 ngaahi fili
 CLF enemy
 'The chief separated the enemies.'
 b. na'e fakamavahevahe'i fili 'a e tu'i
 PAST separate enemy ABS DET chief
 'The chief separated enemies.'
 c. *na'e fakamavahevahe'i hai 'a e tu'i
 PAST separate who ABS DET chief
 ('Who did the chief separate?')

Generally nouns do not inflect for case and their relationship to the governing heads is expressed by particles, such as 'a 'ABS' and 'e 'ERG' above, which can be analyzed as either case-marking clitics or prepositions. A number of researchers specifically argue that they are prepositions (see Broschart 1994, which also includes a review of earlier research). Two arguments support the conception that these are indeed adpositions. First, they are often

⁴ See Sabbagh (2009) and Nicolae and Scontras (2010) for a discussion of the same constraint in Tagalog.

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homophonous with the actual prepositions used in a given language. For example, the prepositions in Māori are *i* ‘in, to’, *ki* ‘toward, at’, *e* ‘from, by’, and *a* ‘of’. Of these, *i* marks direct objects, *ki*, indirect (possibly dative) objects, and *e* marks passive by-phrases. The second argument in favor of treating these markers as prepositions and not pure case markers, comes from the fact that the “oblique” case forms do not combine with any prepositions, an unexpected distribution pattern if some forms with case markers are to be governed by prepositions. However, there is still no consensus in the literature on what these elements are, and we would like to emphasize that their status is unlikely to be uniform across different languages.

3.2. Possessive and classifier constructions

Very few Austronesian languages have gender classes (Blust 2013; Chen and Polinsky 2026). In those languages that have gender distinctions, the agreement in gender is registered on the determiner. For example, Teop (ISO 639-3 *tio*) (Mosel 2007) has three noun classes: *e*-class (personal names, people with high social status, pets), *a*-class (all other humans, vertebrae, landmarks), and *o*-class (plants, amorphous masses). Since gender is infrequent and is limited to determiner agreement we won’t be discussing it below.

A much more common division of nouns is into directly- and indirectly-possessed classes. Semantically, direct possession corresponds roughly to inalienable (other terms used include obligatory, inherent, subordinate, or realized) possession, and indirect possession includes everything that can be alienably possessed (also known as dominant or unrealized possession). Beyond the small core of truly inalienable entities such as body parts, the semantics of (in)alienability is not entirely predictable; it has been subject to rich discussion in the literature (see Milner 1967, Lynch 1973, 1997, Lichtenberk 1983a, 1985, 2005b, Wilson 1982, Bickel and Nichols 2008, Nichols and Bickel 2008 and references therein).

Morphologically, the distinction is marked in diverse ways. In Drehu (ISO 639-3 *dhv*) (Moyses-Faurie 1983: 60-61), inalienable possession is marked by an affix on the head noun indicating that the possessor and alienably possessed nouns have only a freestanding possession marker:

- | | | | | | |
|----------------------|-----------|-----------------|---------------|-----------------|--------------|
| (16) a. inalienable: | <i>la</i> | <i>pengō-ng</i> | | <i>keme-hun</i> | <i>Drehu</i> |
| | DET | manner-INAL.1SG | | father-INAL.1PL | |
| | | ‘my manner’ | | ‘their father’ | |
| b. alienable: | <i>la</i> | <i>ihnim i</i> | <i>angeic</i> | | |
| | DET | love | PRP 3SG | | |
| | | ‘his love’ | | | |

Inalienable possession marking may be obligatory, with 3sg typically being the default, citation form. Alienable possession marking is never obligatory.⁵

In Polynesian languages, the distinction between inalienable and alienable possession is represented as the contrast between two series, the *o* series corresponds roughly to inalienable possession, and the *a* series corresponds roughly to alienable possession. Compare the examples from Samoan (ISO 639-3 *smo*) (Mosel & Hovdhaugen 1992:282–290):

- | | | | | | | |
|---------|-----------|----------------------|------------|-----------|--------------|---------------|
| (17) a. | <i>le</i> | <i>naiŋi</i> | <i>a</i> | <i>le</i> | <i>faiŋe</i> | <i>Samoan</i> |
| | the | knife | 3SG.POSS.A | the | woman | |
| | | ‘The woman’s knife’ | | | | |
| b. | <i>le</i> | <i>uso</i> | <i>o</i> | <i>le</i> | <i>faiŋe</i> | |
| | the | knife | 3SG.POSS.O | the | woman | |
| | | ‘the woman’s sister’ | | | | |

⁵ The complete absence of possessive markers is unusual, and such languages are rare, e.g., Toqabaqita (Lichtenberk 2009).

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Within alienable possession, many Oceanic languages further distinguish several categories based on salient properties of objects (see Lichtenberk 1983a for an overview and Bender and Beller 2006 for an overview and historical reconstruction). The most common, and rather simple, system is the one that divides entities into food, drink, and everything else. Micronesian languages have a more articulated classification (cf. Dyen 1965, Benton 1968 for Chuukese; Rehg 1981 for Pohnpeian (ISO 639-3 *pon*); Lee 1975 for Kosrae (ISO 639-3 *kos*)).⁶ The classification into categories such as ‘food’, ‘drink’, ‘general’, etc., is encoded by freestanding expressions inside the DP which are indexed for the person and number of the possessor; in what follows we will gloss them as CLF. Compare in Iaa (ISO 639-3 *iai*) (Ozanne-Rivierre 1976: 189):⁷

- | | | | | |
|---------|--------------------|-------------|-----------------|-------------|
| (18) a. | <i>bele-n</i> | <i>kəiə</i> | ‘his/her water’ | <i>Iaai</i> |
| | CLF.DRINK-3SG.POSS | water | | |
| b. | <i>hanii-n</i> | <i>wəw</i> | ‘his/her fish’ | |
| | CLF.FOOD-3SG.POSS | fish | | |
| c. | <i>əni-n</i> | <i>meie</i> | ‘his/her fire’ | |
| | CLF.GEN-3SG.POSS | fire | | |

The actual category of these classificatory expressions has been subject to debate. Most researchers agree that they are heads; their order in the DP follows the general headedness principles of a language. In most Austronesian languages they precede the noun denoting the possessum, although in VSO Micronesian languages they follow the noun. Most researchers agree that these expressions are different from sortal and measure classifiers familiar from such languages as Chinese or Thai (see, however, den Dikken 2003: ch. 2 for a case for their being more similar to the familiar classifiers than one would assume). Unlike the better-known Southeast Asian classifiers, Austronesian classifiers are not obligatory in counting, their inventory is more limited than that of familiar classifier languages, and most importantly, they do not serve to individuate and atomize nouns (cf. also Palmer and Brown 2007: 203).

Some researchers suggest that these words are a special closed class of nouns which take pronominal possessive marking and nominal dependents (Palmer and Brown 2007; Palmer 2009b). This approach relies on the parallelism between the classifiers and inalienably possessed nouns, which are also indexed for the person and number of their possessor using the same marking. The alternative, proposed by Lichtenberk (1983a, 2009), is that these expressions should be considered “relational classifiers”, thus functional elements, whose main purpose is to individuate the relation between the possessor and possessum under indirect possession. Lichtenberk’s main morphosyntactic argument against treating these words as nouns comes from the fact that they are typically monosyllabic/monomoraic, while all other lexical nouns in Oceanic are disyllabic and/or bimoraic. Thus, “classifiers” do not meet the minimal nominal word criterion (Lichtenberk 2009: 385).

3.3. *The Genitive Relative Construction*

Polynesian languages have a striking construction known as the genitive or possessive relative clause (GRC), which is used when relativizing a non-subject. In a GRC, the head noun is apparently modified by a genitive possessor, which is interpreted as the subject of the attached relative clause. The relative clause itself appears to lack a subject:

⁶ It seems that the highly-articulated Micronesian classification is subject to attrition. For example, while Benton and Dyen recognize over two dozen classificatory expressions in traditional Chuukese (ISO 639-3 *chk*), in our work with Chuukese consultants in the late 1990s, we found only the following: general, inanimate mobile, inanimate able to grow, small/intimate, drinkable, edible (raw), edible (cooked), animate female, and animate male.

⁷ The form of the possessive morpheme is phonologically conditioned (Ozanne-Rivierre 1976: 149); the allomorph *-n* appears after the long *e* and after the long/short *i*, and unless the consonant preceding *i* is palatalized, the allomorph *-n* appears elsewhere.

To appear in: Bill Palmer (ed.) *Oceania*. Berlin: Mouton

- (20) a. *'ua hāpono te 'orometua 'i te rata* *Tahitian*
 PERF send DET teacher OBJ DET letter
 'The teacher sent a/the letter.'
- b. *te rata_i tā te 'orometua_k [i hāpono ___k ___i]*
 DET letter POSS DET teacher DEP_TNS send
 'the letter that the teacher sent'
 not *'the teacher's letter that someone sent'
- (21) *ka wā_i a Pāka'a [i ha'alele aku ai_i* *Hawaiian*
 DET time POSS Pakaa DEP_TNS leave DIR RP
iā Waipi'o]
 OBJ Waipio
 'the moment when Pakaa left Waipio' (Hawkins 2000: 134)

The GRC raises several analytical challenges. The first concerns whether the genitive noun phrase is internal or external to the relative clause. For seemingly similar constructions in the unrelated Altaic languages (Miyagawa 2011), the assumption is that the genitive is the subject of the relative clause and is internal to it. Baker (2006) argues for this view in Hawaiian (ISO 639-3 *haw*). Other researchers of Polynesian GRCs, however, are in agreement that the genitive is a genuine possessor and is hence external to the relative clause (Clark 1976: 118; Bauer 1997, 2007; Hawkins 2000; Otsuka 2010b; Herd et al. 2011). Evidence for this conclusion comes from the fact that in Polynesian languages that allow pre-nominal possessors, the genitive in a GRC can occur pre-nominally, (22), a position that cannot be inside the relative clause:

- (22) *ka Pua puke i kākau ai* *Hawaiian*
 GEN Pua book PFV write RP
 'the book that Pua wrote' (Baker 2006:9, citing Hopkins 1992:233)

Accepting that the genitive is external to the relative clause, two analytical issues arise for which there is no consensus. We state them here without adjudicating on the evidence. The first issue is how the missing subject in the relative clause is syntactically represented in the relative clause, if at all. In other words, what is the identity of the empty category *e* in the representation in (23):

- (1) [DP N_i POSSESSOR_k [rel clause V e_k ...]]

The second question is how the obligatory coreference relation between the genitive and a syntactic representation of the subject, which we represent by coindexation above, is enforced. A variety of answers to these questions are proposed in the literature (Otsuka 2010b; Herd et al. 2011), but without clear answers yet. Assuming that there is no movement relationship between the genitive on the head noun and an empty category inside the relative clause, the way coreference is established via co-indexation is relevant to syntactic theory because of the importance it attaches to cross-clausal dependencies. A better understanding of the GRC may lead to a new understanding of anaphoric dependencies if the mechanism used in GRCs turns out to be a novel one.

4. Verbal categories

The verbal domains in Austronesian languages have been very widely described and analyzed. Here we survey some of the major areas of research.

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4.1. Agreement

Austronesian languages with agreement generally mark agreement with the subject, regardless of their case alignment (see Baker 2010 for an overview of agreement parameters observed in Austronesian). That marking is achieved using two basic strategies: affixal verbal agreement, common, for example, in Melanesian languages (see the discussions in Yamada 2006 and Donohue and Musgrave 2007 for representative languages and examples), and clitics (in Micronesian, some dialects of Fijian ((ISO 639-3 *fij*), Rotuman (ISO 639-3 *rtm*), Polynesian, as well as some Melanesian languages). Micronesian languages and some Melanesian languages also show agreement with the object (see Song 1994 for an overview of the Nuclear Micronesian data, as well as Lynch, Ross, and Crowley 2002). Compare in Puluwat (ISO 639-3 *puw*), which illustrates a common pattern of agreement:

- (24) *Wurumwo ya yákékkél-ee-í átekkít mákk Puluwat*
 Wurumwo 3SG.SUBJ teach-TRANS-3PL.OBJ children writing
 ‘Wurumwo taught the children writing.’ (Elbert 1974: 86)

Two questions are of interest in relation to agreement morphosyntax in Austronesian. First, a number of Austronesian languages are pro-drop (see Paul and Massam 2021 for a brief overview), but it is not yet clear if there is a correlation between the availability of pro-drop and the availability of agreement. For example, Micronesian languages, which have relatively rich agreement, also have pro-drop, but so do agreement-poor Melanesian languages such as Cheke Holo (ISO 639-3 *mrn*) (Palmer 2009a; Neeleman and Szendrői 2007). The potential relationship between pro-drop and rich agreement has been very widely investigated in unrelated languages, and Austronesian languages have the potential to inform the debate.

The second issue has to do with the nature of the agreement markers: are they better analyzed as affixes or clitics? It is generally assumed that subject markers are clitics, often on the basis of separability from the verb. For example, in Rotuman, which on the surface seems to employ subject suffixes, den Dikken (2003: ch. 6), following Vamarasi (2002), argues that these are clitics. His main argument is that the apparent “pronominal suffixes” attach to any element on their immediate left and do not select for a particular category of host. He also cites diachronic evidence that pronominal suffixes can develop from clitics. Object markers are typically assumed to be suffixes (cf. Song 1994). To make headway on this issue, criteria are needed to distinguish clitics from affixes that can be used on a cross-linguistic basis (see Zwicky and Pullum 1983; Zwicky 1985; Preminger 2009). The distinctions between affixation and cliticization have lately generated a lively debate in theoretical linguistics (e.g., Preminger 2009), with some (e.g. Haspelmath 2021) highlighting the ambiguity between these categories and the difficulties in distinguishing them. Oceanic languages offer potential, rich empirical contributions in these areas.

4.2. Voice

Perhaps no morphosyntactic category has been as much investigated in Austronesian as voice. Western Austronesian languages exhibit several types of symmetric voice systems that allow multiple phrasal categories to be promoted to syntactically pivotal status without downgrading other arguments. Such systems are commonly referred to in the literature as *symmetrical voice* systems (Himmelmann 2002, 2005; Riesberg 2014; a.o.), as they permit the promotion of various arguments beyond the agent and theme to the syntactically prominent position of the clause. The analysis of these alternations has prompted much debate and engagement in the recent literature, as summarized in Section 4.2.1. Various Austronesian languages also exhibit constructions that resemble passives, middles, and antipassives of more familiar Indo-European languages, which we discuss in section 4.2.2.

4.2.1 Austronesian-type voice systems

Many Western Austronesian languages of Taiwan, the Philippines, northern Borneo, and northern Sulawesi display a four-way verbal morphology commonly referred to as ‘Philippine-type voice.’ Descriptively, voice morphology of this type indicates the grammatical role of the syntactically prominent phrase in a clause, as illustrated by the Paiwan (ISO 639-3 *pwn*) example in (25). Following the convention in the literature, we refer to this phrase—the sole element in the clause eligible for A’-extraction (see Section 6)—as the *pivot* hereafter.

To appear in: Bill Palmer (ed.) *Oceania*. Berlin: Mouton

- (25) a. *q<m>alup a caucau tua vavuy i gadu tua vuluq. Paiwan*
 <AV>hunt PIVOT man CM2 pig LOC mountain OBL spear
 ‘The man hunts wild pigs in the mountains with a spear.’ (Actor Voice)
- b. *qalup-en nua caucau a vavuy i gadu tua vuluq.*
 hunt-PV CM1 man PIVOT pig LOC mountain OBL spear
 ‘The man hunts wild pigs in the mountains with a spear.’ (Patient Voice)
- c. *qalup-an nua caucau tua vavuy a gadu tua vuluq.*
 hunt-LV CM1 man CM2 pig PIVOT mountain OBL spear
 ‘The man hunts wild pigs in the mountains with a spear.’ (Locative Voice)
- d. *si-qalup nua caucau tua vavuy i gadu a vuluq.*
 CV-hunt CM1 man CM2 pig LOC mountain PIVOT spear
 ‘The man hunts wild pigs in the mountains with a spear.’ (Ferrell 1979:202) (Circumstantial Voice)

In Philippine-type languages that are morphologically conservative, this four-way system appears across three moods: indicative, optative/hortative, and imperative/negative. See below the reconstructed voice paradigm (26) that can be traced back to Proto-Austronesian or a stage immediately after its split (Ross 2009). The analysis of this voice system has triggered much debate in the literature (e.g., Payne 1982; De Wolf 1988; Shibatani 1988; Mithun 1994; Rackowski 2002; Aldridge 2004; Rackowski & Richards 2005; Erlewine et al. 2017; Chen 2025; a.o.). See Chen and McDonnell (2019) and work cited there for an overview of existing analyses and issues revolving around the case alignment of these languages.

- (26) a. Actor Voice. b. Patient Voice. c. Locative Voice d. Circumstantial Voice
- | | | | | |
|----------------------|-------|------|------|----------|
| indicative | *<um> | *-en | *-an | *Si-/Sa- |
| optative, hortative | *-a | *-aw | *-ay | *-anay |
| imperative, negative | -Ø | *-u | *-i | *-an |

While the full four-way voice system is found primarily in Taiwan and the Philippines, many languages of northern Borneo display reduced Philippine-type systems with only two- or three-way distinctions (see Clayre 1996; Hemmings 2015, 2016; McDonnell & Chen 2022 for overviews). Languages of western Indonesia also exhibit various reduced and innovative voice systems, generally referred to in the literature as ‘Indonesian-type voice.’ These systems are characterized by a two-way contrast between Actor Voice and Object Voice, with some languages further exhibiting a third voice that is syntactically similar to English-type passives (e.g., Arka & Ross 2005; Cole et al. 2008; Legate 2014; McDonnell & Chen 2022). The Indonesian (ISO 639-3 *ind*) examples below illustrate such a three-voice contrast.

- (27) a. *Amir mem-baca buku itu.* Indonesian
 AmirAV-read book that
 ‘Amir read the book.’ (Actor Voice)
- b. *Buku itu saya/kamu/dia baca.*
 book that 1SG/2/3 read
 ‘The book, I/you/they read.’ (Object Voice)
- c. *Buku itu di-baca oleh Amir*
 book that PASS-read by Amir
 ‘The book was read by Amir’ (Arka and Manning 1998: 1-2) (Passive Voice)

Overall, more elaborate voice systems are characteristic of Austronesian languages to the west of Oceania.

4.2.2 Passives, middles, and antipassives

Not only do some Indonesian-type languages possess English-like passives, but such passives are also found across Austronesian languages of various typological profiles. Consider examples below from *Tukang Besi* and *Māori*, (28a–b).

To appear in: Bill Palmer (ed.) *Oceania*. Berlin: Mouton

- (28) a. *'U-to-kiki'i na iko'o.* *Tukang Besi*
 2SG.R-PASS-bite NOM 2SG
 'You were bitten.' (Donohue 2002:87)
- b. *I koohete-tia a Pani e Huia.* *Māori*
 T/A scold-PASS PERS Pani by Huia
 'Pani was scolded by Huia.' (Bauer 1993:396)

Some languages allow such passivization freely and extend it to intransitive predicates as well, cf. in Hawaiian (see also (28a) above):

- (29) a. *ua komo-hia ka mana'o i loko ona.* *Hawaiian*
 PERF enter-PASS DET thought to inside 3SG.POSS
 'A thought occurred to him.' (Elbert and Pukui 1979: 86)
- b. *ua hae-hia ka 'ilio.*
 PERF bark-PASS DET dog
 'The dog was angry.' (Elbert and Pukui 1979: 86)

A subset of Western Austronesian languages also exhibit English-like passives. Consider the examples from Puyuma (ISO 639-3 *puy*) (30) and Acehnese (ISO 639-3 *ace*) (31) below. Note in particular the co-occurrence of passive morphology with Philippine-type voice morphology in the Puyuma example (30b) (e.g., *m-* 'Actor Voice'). See Chen (2022) for discussion of how this co-occurrence informs our understanding of Philippine-type voice morphology as distinct from valency-rearranging morphology.

- (30) a. *M-apit=ku dra inupidran.* *Puyuma*
 AV-pile.up=1SG.PIVOT INDF.ACC garland
 'I piled up the garlands.'
- b. *M-u-apit na inupidran.*
 AV-PASS-pile.up DEF.PIVOT garland
 'The garlands are piled up.' (Cauquelin 2015:60)
- (31) a. *Uleue nyan di-kap Ion.* *Acehnese*
 snake DEM 3.FAM-bite 1SG
 'The snake bit me.'
- b. *Lon di-kap le uleue nyan.*
 1SG 3.FAM-bite LE snake DEM
 'I was bitten by the snake.' (Legate 2012:497)

Passive and passive-like constructions (e.g., the Acehnese examples in (31)) in Indonesian-type languages have attracted considerable attention in recent work (Arka 2005; Legate 2014; Cole, Mckinnon, and Hermon 2019; Nomoto 2020; a.o.). Studies have focused on the syntactic status of the agent—whether it is an argument or an adjunct—and the position of the theme—whether it behaves as a topic or a subject. Findings indicate cross-linguistic variation on both points (see, for example, Legate 2012; Jeoung 2020; McDonnell and Chen 2021; Patrianto and Chen 2024, and the references therein for further discussion.).

Austronesian languages are important for advancing our understanding of passive typology because of their various language-particular characteristics. For instance, in Samoan (Cook 1996), Woleian (ISO 639-3 *woe*) (Sohn 1975), and possibly in Marshallese (Willson 2010), passivization is possible only for those transitive verbs that denote an intended and apparent result. Thus, verbs like 'untie' or 'burn' can passivize (untying or burning leads to a clear change of the object's state) but verbs like 'count' do not (Willson 2010: 255). One challenge that Austronesian languages of Oceania often pose is that putative passive morphology is not overt (see, van den Berg and Boerger 2011 for an overview). The discussion of Fijian is illustrative, with Schütz and Nawadra (1972) arguing against

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passive and Kikusawa (1998) arguing for a passive. Even in languages where there is overt morphology, several strategies may be used (as in Marshallese, cf. Willson 2010:238), or the marking may be ambiguous with other verbal categories, such as transitive and perfective (see Willson 2010 for Marshallese; Cook 1996, Mosel and Hovdhaugen 1992: 198-204, 729-743 for Samoan).

A consequence of null morphology is that it becomes difficult to distinguish passives from null argument constructions. For example, subjects and objects can be dropped in Marshallese for some verb classes, making the analysis of the “passive” in (32) unclear.

- (32) *John e=naaj ηmwij~ηmwij rainin* *Marshallese*
 John 3SG.AGR=FUT operate-INTR today
 (a) ‘John will operate today.’
 (b) ‘John will be operated on today.’ (Willson 2010: 233, citing Bender 1969)

Such languages and phenomena, including passive imperatives to be discussed below, are relevant to the theoretical analysis of passive. Despite decades of syntactic theorizing (Baker, Johnson, and Roberts 1989; Goodall 1993; Collins 2005; Legate 2012; Bruening to appear), there is still disagreement on major aspects of the construction, including Case properties of passives and the analysis of the agent *by*-phrase.

Middle constructions are common across the family. In western Austronesian languages the middle typically carries a distinct verbal affix from its transitive counterpart (Huang and Sung 2008; Kardana 2011; Udayana 2021; Arka and Wouk 2014). Consider below active-middle alternation in Indonesian.

- (33) a. *Dia men-jual buku.* *Indonesian*
 3SG AV-sell book
 ‘(S)he sold a book.’ (Actor Voice)
 b. *Buku itu ber-jual.*
 book that MV-sell
 ‘The book sells.’ (Udayana 2021:10) (Middle Voice)

Like passives and middles, antipassive constructions are also observed in typologically distinct Austronesian languages. See, for example, Chung (2020) for a description of Chamorro. Khairunnisa (2022) for Sasak (ISO 639-3 *sas*), and Moysé-Faurie (2021) for an overview of Oceanic antipassives. See also Polinsky (2017a) for a discussion of several pseudo noun-incorporation constructions in Polynesian languages that can be compared with antipassive.

4.2.3 Applicatives and causatives

Many Austronesian languages also make productive use of valency-increasing morphology. Recent work on has highlighted the centrality of applicatives to clause structure and argument realization in Indonesian-type languages (e.g. Son & Cole 2004, 2008; Kroeger 2007; Kaufman 2017; McDonnell and Truong 2024; a.o.). Research on the syntax-semantics of applicatives extends beyond their prototypical function—promoting a peripheral semantic role to direct-object status—to explore a wider range of applicative meanings and constraints. See Truong (2025) for an overview. In particular, several studies argue that the applied argument can bear special properties that distinguish it from canonical objects; for example, in Balinese (ISO 639-3 *ban*) it has been claimed to require specificity (Natarina 2020; Evans & Vander Klok 2022). Together, these findings underscore both the functional diversity of applicatives and the language-specific constraints that shape their realization in Indonesian-type systems.

4.2.4 Imperative

The syntax of imperatives in Austronesian has been little analyzed (but see Koopman 2005; Potsdam 2010, and also Xrakovsky 2001 and Aikhenvald 2010 for some mention of imperatives in Austronesian, among other languages). In morphologically conservative Philippine-type languages, imperative mood is expressed as portmanteau voice morphology that shows four-way voice alternation, as introduced earlier in 4.2.1 (see (25)). Consider the Puyuma examples in (35).

To appear in: Bill Palmer (ed.) *Oceania*. Berlin: Mouton

- (35) a. *Ø-ekan dra padremul!* *Puyuma*
 AV.IMP-eat INDF.ACC medicine
 ‘Take the medicine!’ (Actor Voice imperative -Ø)
- b. *ekan-u na padremul!*
 eat-PV.IMP DEF.PIVOT medicine
 ‘Take the medicine!’ (Patient Voice imperative -u)
- c. *ekan-an i Senten dra padraka!*
 eat-CV.IMP SG.PIVOT Senten INDF.ACC. meat
 ‘Eat the meat for Senten!’ (Circumstantial Voice imperative -an)

This elaborate system is largely simplified in Austronesian languages outside Taiwan and the Philippines (see McDonnell and Chen 2022 for an overview). In Malayo-Polynesian languages, imperatives are commonly marked with the suffix *-i* or zero-marked (Blust 2013). A widely noted characteristic of imperatives in some Austronesian languages is that they commonly occur in the passive voice, in both European-like voice systems and in symmetric systems (note that Philippine languages do not have such passive imperatives). In Māori, (36), the passive is required with a transitive verb (Bauer 1993:32). In Malagasy, (37), the passive imperative is preferred to the active as less direct, although not required.

- (36) a. *patu-a te kurii raa!* *Māori*
 beat-PASS DET dog DIST
 (lit. ‘The dog be beaten!’)
 ‘Beat that dog!’
- b. *whio-nga atu too kurii kia hoki mai*
 whistle-PASS away your dog SJV return hither
 ‘Whistle out to your dog to return!’ (Bauer 1993:32)
- (37) a. *vakio ilay boky!* *Malagasy*
 read.PASS.IMP that book
 (lit. ‘That book be read!’)
 ‘Read that book!’
- b. *ataovy foana ny enti-mody!*
 do.PASS.IMP always DET homework
 ‘Always do the homework!’

Such examples raise a number of analytical issues. Is it a question of grammar and/or usage that determines the bias towards passive imperatives? What accounts for the contrast with English and similar languages where parallel passive imperatives are uniformly ungrammatical (cf. **The dog be beaten!*)? What is the structure of such imperatives and, in particular, what is the subject of the clause? That is, are the clauses genuinely passive with the theme in subject position, or do they represent some other alignment of grammatical functions? Passives are thus potentially informative for the correct analysis of symmetric voice systems, as in Malagasy. In many languages, such as Māori, expression of the agent is restricted in various ways (Bauer 1993:33-34), which further complicates the picture.

4.3. *Serial verbs*

A serial verb construction (SVC) is typically understood as a monoclausal structure expressing a single event and consisting of more than one lexical verb. The relationship between the verbs in SVCs is not expressed by overt morphosyntactic means. The verbs in a SVC all share one or more of the core arguments, typically either the subject argument or the object (theme) argument (Foley and Olson 1985; Comrie 1995; Baker 1989; Collins 1997).

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Since the notion of event and the criteria which allow us to identify the main verb vary from language to language, the notion of SVC is far from typologically or theoretically coherent; some researchers have specifically argued that SVCs do not form a coherent class (Sebba 1987; Baker 1991; Foley 2010). The range of SVCs across languages is highly varied, from what looks like light verb complexes to complex narrative strings. Verbal serialization is more common in, but not exclusive to, languages with impoverished morphology and languages with verb-medial order. Accordingly, in Oceanic SVCs are found primarily in Melanesian languages, many of which are SVO.

SVCs share a number of common properties that distinguish them from coordinated VPs. First, they have to appear in a fixed order, whereas the order of constituents under coordination can be changed. Second, an overt pronoun cannot appear with the second or third verb in SVCs. Third, serial verbs typically fall under the scope of single negation. And finally, object arguments can be A-bar moved under serialization, which would be unexpected in coordination.

Researchers recognize several subtypes of SVCs within Oceanic languages (Crowley 1987; Crowley 2002: ch. 2; Durie 1988; Sperlich 1993; François 2007; Lichtenberk 2007; Senft 2008; Hopperdietzel 2020; Lovstrand 2021; a.o.). Despite some differences, these constructions share several common properties: the verbs appear without any overt linkers or connectors, they cannot have different tense and aspect markings, they can have just one negation, and their mood marking is subject to a number of constraints which we will discuss below.

In the *same-subject* subtype of serialization, two or more verbs within the SVC share the subject:

- (38) *ø-pa ø-tapolou ø-teke pulu-ḗalu* Lewo
 3SG-go 3SG-hide 3SG-stay hole-creek
 ‘He went and hid in the creek bed.’ (Early 1993: 68)

Although we do not have detailed analyses of such structures, we hypothesize that same-subject serialization involves V-V compounds, as has been proposed for similar structures outside Oceanic.

Same-subject SVCs typically include verbs of motion or posture, and it is possible that such SVCs could be reduced to paratactic coordination rather than subordination.

- (39) *na-muali nau-vaa eni leilai* Paamese
 1SG:REAL-walk 1SG:REAL-go to bush
 ‘I walked to the bush.’ (Crowley 2002: 53)

In the type known as *switch-subject serialization*, the object of the one verb in SVC serves as the subject of the next verb (‘the pig’ is subject of ‘hit’ and object of ‘die’):

- (40) *ti-rap nggaya ø-mate* Gitua
 3PL-hit pig 3SG-die
 ‘They killed the pig.’ (Bradshaw 1999: 278)

Next, serialization is common in cases when a non-first verb in the SVC *adds a new argument*, typically a goal (recipient, benefactive), a source, or an instrument. For example:

- (41) *e-metlei pihin keléri k-i-to semel wak* Kele
 2SG-kill woman that IRR-3SG-stand iron long
 ‘Kill that woman with an axe.’ (Lynch, Ross, and Crowley 2002: 143)

Judging by examples, some cases of argument-adding serialization fall under the type of switch-subject serialization, or the case where all the verbs share the subject and theme object (cf. Margetts 2007: 90-96 for examples from different Oceanic languages).

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Under *inclusory serialization*, the subject of the non-first verb is referentially identical to both the subject and object of the first (Crowley 2002: Ch. 2). For example, in (42), the subject of ‘go’ includes both the subject and object of ‘take’:

- (42) *ma-kuri-ko lo-va-haa Paamese*
 1SG:IMM_FUT-take-2SG 1DUAL.INCL-IMM_FUT-go
 ‘I will take you away with me.’ (Crowley 2002: 41)

Finally, research on Oceanic SVCs recognizes so-called *ambient serialization* (Crowley’s term), where a serialized verb denotes a general characteristic of a given event. This type of SVC seems similar to secondary predication or adverbial modification of non-serializing languages.

- (43) *inauna-muasi-ko ø-gaiho Paamese*
 1SG 1SG.REAL-hit-2SG 3SG.REAL-hard
 ‘I hit you hard.’ (Crowley 2002: 61)

Typically, only one verb in SVCs is marked for tense, aspect, and agreement (Collins 1997; Hiraiwa and Bodomo 2008; Ross 2020; Lovstrand 2021), and some take this to be a defining property of SVCs. However, in Paamese (ISO 639-3 *pma*), Numbami (ISO 639-3 *sij*), Kele (ISO 639-3 *sbc*), and possibly some other Oceanic languages, those markers appear on all serialized verbs (Crowley 2002; Bradshaw 2004: 265-6; Ross 2020); in such cases, the markers have to be the same or congruent for tense and aspect. For example, in Paamese, the marking for tense and mood has to be identical on all the verbs inside the SVC (Crowley 2002: 59-62). In contrast, when one of the verbs takes a subordinate complement, the subordinate verb shows dependent mood marking (immediate mood rather than realis), and this difference in mood marking separates genuine SVCs from paratactic subordination (Crowley 2002: 55-57, 62-64). SVCs are different from asyndetic coordination in that they allow only one subject clitic per verbal complex, although the placement of that single clitic may vary (Crowley 2002: 56). Other distinctions include the absence of a linker or conjunction in SVCs and the uniform scope of negation over all the verbs in the SVC.

We are aware of these differences in Paamese because of Crowley’s careful work on this language (Crowley 1982, 2002: Ch. 3, 5). However, the nature of restrictions on SVCs may vary across Oceanic languages. In the absence of detailed data from individual languages, it is difficult to judge the relevant examples or assign a particular syntactic structure to them. Apparent SVCs may in fact stand in for at least four other structures: (a) paratactic coordination of verbs, (b) control structures, (c) compound verbs with one of the verbs possibly serving as a light verb, and (d) combinations of a verb and adverb. With respect to the last type, we have already commented on the difficulty of identifying the class of adjectives in Oceanic. The identification of adverbs is equally difficult, as it is sometimes hard to determine if a word following a verb is an adverb or a secondary verb. For example, in Big Nambas (ISO 639-3 *nmb*), it is not entirely clear if the word *maməln* is to be interpreted as an adverb or as a stative verb:

- (44) *a-van maməln a nəhau Big Nambas*
 3REAL-PL-do aimless OBL pudding
 ‘They made the pudding in a slovenly manner.’ (Crowley 2002: 51, citing Fox 1979)

The discussion in Crowley seems to suggest this may be a SVC; however, it does not conform to the established types of SVCs, and most importantly, in the absence of detailed diagnostics like those for Paamese, it is hard to draw any conclusions about this construction. Since quite a number of descriptions of Oceanic SVCs do not go into the same level of detail as Crowley did for Paamese, the limits of Oceanic serialization remain to be explored.

For serial verb constructions in western Austronesian languages, see Mead and Youngman (2008), Yeh and Huang (2009), Chang (2010), and Klimenko (2012), where data from individual languages are presented and analyzed.

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5. *Alignment*

5.1. *Alignment types*

As mentioned above, Austronesian nouns typically do not bear case-marking affixes and are marked for case by phrase-marking clitics (conventionally written as free morphemes). The majority of Austronesian languages of Oceania show a nominative-accusative alignment: the subject of an intransitive verb, S, and the subject of transitive verb, A, appear in the same case (nominative), and the object, O, is in a distinct case (accusative). Tahitian (ISO 639-3 *tah*) in (45) is representative. Subjects are unmarked, and objects occur with the accusative particle 'i.

- (45) a. *te ma'ue nei te mau manu* *Tahitian*
 ASP fly ASP DET PL bird
 'The birds are flying.'
 b. *'ua 'ite te tamaiti 'i te mau manu*
 PERF see DET child ACC DET PL bird
 'The child saw (the) birds.'

Numerous Eastern Austronesian languages (i.e., languages of Polynesia, Melanesia, and Micronesia), including the majority of Southern Oceanic languages, show so-called neutral alignment: noun phrases show no overt case marking, and grammatical functions are distinguished by agreement and/or word order. Lewo (ISO 639-3 *lww*) (Oceanic) is an example:

- (46) *omami me-muni wii* *Lewo*
 1PL.EXCL 1PL.EXCL.SUBJ-drink water
 'We drank water.' (Early 1993: 73)

Finally, some Eastern Austronesian languages display ergative case alignment: the subject of an intransitive and the object of a transitive verb are expressed by an absolutive form, and the subject of a transitive verb is in the ergative case. Consider Tongan:

- (47) a. *na'e 'alu 'a Sione ki he ako* *Tongan*
 PAST go ABS John to DEF school
 'John went to school.'
 b. *na'e ui'i 'e Sione 'a Mele*
 PAST call ERG John ABS Mary
 'John called Mary.'

In addition to Western Polynesian languages, the ergative alignment is found in Roviana (ISO 639-3 *rug*) (Corston 1996, Corston-Oliver 2002), several languages of New Caledonia (Bril 1997, 2002; Moyses-Faurie 1983; Moyses-Faurie and Ozanne-Rivierre 1983), and Melanesian languages such as Motu (ISO 639-3 *tuc*) (Lister-Turner and Clark 1931; Dixon 1994: 58), Hula (Pat 1996, Ball 2007), and Sinaugoro (ISO 639-3 *snc*) (Tauberschmidt and Bala 1992). Cf. example (2a) above from East Futunan and (48) from Nêlêmwâ (ISO 639-3 *nee*):

- (48) a. *i aa-thu-maada ø âlô hleny* *Nêlêmwâ*
 3SG NOM.AGENTIS-make-nostalgia ABS child DEICTIC
 'This child is always sad.' (Bril 2002: 71)
 b. *i fhe me ø pwâ-ciic hleny ru âlô*
 3SG bring DIR ABS fruit DEICTIC ERG child
 'The child brought this fruit here.' (Bril 2002: 136)

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Unlike Eastern Austronesian languages, most of which display a relatively simple case system, Western Austronesian languages known as the Philippine-type (see 4.2.1 for an overview) feature a complex argument marking mechanism that is sensitive not only to clause transitivity but also to the semantic role of a given phrase and the voice type of the clause. Because the analysis of the basic case markers of these languages remains controversial, their case alignment has likewise remained a point of contention. The table below presents the four-way case pattern found in these languages, where CM stands for ‘case marker.’ The marker labeled “CM1” occurs on non-pivot agents in bivalent clauses and on non-pivot themes in LV/CV-marked unaccusatives, and has been analyzed as either ergative or nominative by different researchers. The marker “CM2” can appear on a wide range of phrases, including theme arguments in bivalent clauses, and has been analyzed as either accusative or oblique.

(49) Mapping between voice and argument-marking in morphologically conservative Philippine-type languages (Chen & McDonnell 2019: 5)

	a. Actor Voice	b. Patient Voice	c. Locative Voice	d. Circumstantial Voice
agent	PIVOT	CM1	CM1	CM1
theme	CM2	PIVOT	CM2	CM2
locative	P1	P1	PIVOT	P1
instrument/benefactor	P2	P2	P2	PIVOT

Whether this case pattern reflects an ergative, accusative, or typologically distinct alignment has long remained a point of contention in the Austronesian literature. See Chen (2025) for a review of these approaches, along with new arguments in favor of an accusative analysis based on comparative data from Tagalog and several Formosan languages. For specific analyses, see Blake 1906; Schachter 1976; Payne 1982; Gerds 1988; Shibatani 1988; Guilfoyle, Hung & Travis 1992; Himmelmann 2002; Aldridge 2004, 2012, 2017; Pearson 2001, 2005; Rackowski 2002; Rackowski & Richards 2005; Erlewine et al. 2017; among others. For discussion of case alignment in Indonesian-type languages, see Aldridge (2004, 2008), Cole et al. (2008), Riesberg (2014), and McDonnell (2016).

5.2. Syntactic ergativity

One crucial issue in studies of ergativity is the existence of syntactic ergativity as opposed to morphological ergativity (Dixon 1979, 1994; Manning 1996; Aldridge 2008; Deal 2016; Polinsky 2016, a.o.). Languages such as Tongan clearly show morphological ergativity, in which S and O are *morphologically* distinct from A, as in (50). Syntactic ergativity exists when S and O additionally act *syntactically* distinctly from A with respect to various phenomena, such as control, pro-drop, and extraction. Tchekhoff (1979, 1981), Otsuka (2000, 2010a), and Polinsky (2016) argue that Tongan shows syntactic ergativity in addition to morphological ergativity. This appears most clearly in its zero anaphora (coreference) options. When two clauses are conjoined with *pea* ‘and’, both coreferential noun phrases must be in the absolutive position. The missing elements in the second clauses below must be absolutive, corresponding to the primitives S or O (Dixon 1979). It cannot correspond to A, which is ergative.

- (50) a. *na'e taa'i 'e Mele_i 'a Hina_j pea tangi e_{i/*j} Tongan*
 PAST hit ERG Mele ABS Hina and cry
 ‘Mele hit Hina and she (Hina) cried.’ (Otsuka 2000: 37)
- b. *na'e 'ave 'e Sione_i 'a Mele_k ki he palasi pea*
 PAST take ERG John ABS Mary to DET palace and
*fakamolemole'i 'e he kuini e_{k/*i}*
 forgive ERG DET queen (Otsuka 2000: (5.16))
 ‘John took Mary to the palace and the queen forgave her/*him.’
- c. **na'e tangi 'a Hina_i pea taa'i e_i 'a Mele*
 PAST cry ABS Hina and cry ABS Mele
 ‘Hina cried and hit Mele.’ (Otsuka 2000: 37)

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The domain where syntactic ergativity seems most robust is that of A-bar movement, in particular, relativization.⁸ The generalization is that absolutive arguments relativize using a distinct pattern from ergative arguments. The former typically relativize using a gap strategy, while the latter do not. Consider Tongan again. In the examples below, absolutive DPs must relativize with a gap, (51), but the ergative requires a resumptive pronoun in the relative clause, (53). A resumptive pronoun would be ungrammatical in (51), and a gap is impossible in (52) (Otsuka 2000:117).

- (51) a. *e fefine na'e 'alu ki Tonga* *Tongan*
 DEF woman PAST go to Tonga
 'the woman who went to Tonga' (Otsuka 2000:116)
- b. *e fefine 'oku 'ofa'i 'e Sione*
 DEF woman PRS love ERG Sione
 'the woman who Sione loves' (Otsuka 2000:116)
- (52) *e siana na'a ne langa 'a e fale* *Tongan*
 DEF woman PAST 3SG build ABS DEF house
 'the man who built the house' (Otsuka 2000:117)

The impossibility of a gap with ergative arguments is common in Austronesian, even when other signs of syntactic ergativity are absent.⁹ Such a pattern is not unique to Austronesian: among the thirty-something morphologically ergative languages in WALS (Comrie 2008), only a handful allow A-bar movement of the ergative with a gap.

Syntactic ergativity, including its instantiations in Austronesian, has been subject to lively debate in theoretical linguistics, and parallels are often drawn between Austronesian and Mayan. Some researchers consider syntactic ergativity a side-effect of the licensing of the absolutive case (e.g., Aldridge 2004; Deal 2016, 2017; Coon et al. 2014; Clemens and Tollan 2021), others derive it from the status of the ergative as a PP, not a DP (e.g., Polinsky 2016, 2017b), and still others view it as a processing constraint (e.g., Tollan and Clemens 2021). Work on real-time processing of A-bar dependencies in Austronesian is still scarce (e.g., Longenbaugh and Polinsky 2017; Bondoc et al. 2018; Tanaka et al. 2019; Tollan 2020; Pizarro-Guevara and Wagers 2024) and future research is needed in this area.

5.3. Case assignment in ergative languages

The presence of distinct relativization strategies in the absence of other signs of syntactic ergativity has led researchers to look elsewhere for an explanation of the above Tongan pattern. Many researchers have tried to link it to the way the absolutive and ergative cases are assigned—an issue of considerable significance in the theoretical literature (see Aldridge 2008, Legate 2008, Woolford 2006, Deal 2016 and Clemens and Tollan 2021, a.o.).

All researchers conceive of the absolutive as a structural case, however, there is no general consensus with respect to the head which assigns such a case. The general approach promoted in recent work is that there are two subtypes of ergative languages, distinguished by the availability of absolutive case in non-finite clauses. In languages of the first type, the absolutive is either licensed by *v* (e.g., Aldridge 2004; Clemens & Tollan 2021) or a form of morphological default (e.g., Legate 2008; Levin 2018), hence its availability in nonfinite environments. The second type of ergative languages, where the absolutive is unavailable in nonfinite clauses, are languages where T is the sole licenser of absolutive case. In other words, in such languages the absolutive is like the nominative as the highest structural case is assigned in the derivation. This structural case is assigned to the subject of intransitives and the object of transitives, following the assumption that the ergative subject is case-licensed in-situ and 'trapped' in

⁸ Since argument wh-questions in these languages are formed using clefts or pseudo-clefts, their formation also relies on relativization. See section 7.2.2 below.

⁹ Niuean is a clear exception; both ergative and absolutive noun phrases relativize with a gap (Chung 1978; Seiter 1980; Longenbaugh & Polinsky 2016, 2017).

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Such a reanalysis would account for the null marking of the absolutive (as it develops from the unmarked nominative), overt marking of the ergative, and for VOSX languages, for the word order.

Alternatively, one could imagine that the ergative alignment predated the accusative alignment; the middle or antipassive construction would spread as the general transitive as shown below, and the former ergative could either disappear or be re-analyzed into a passive, in the reversal of (55).

- (55) a. stage 1:
- | | | |
|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Verb-MIDDLE/ANTI | DP-Subject/Agent | PP-Adjunct/Theme |
| | ABSOLUTIVE | OBLIQUE CASE |
- b. stage 2:
- | | | |
|--------------|------------------|-----------------|
| Verb(-AFFIX) | DP-Subject/Agent | DP-Object/Theme |
| | NOMINATIVE | ACCUSATIVE |

Both diachronic analyses have been proposed in the literature for Austronesian, primarily in relation to Proto-Polynesian where the marker **e* is reconstructed as general oblique/ergative, **i* as direct object/object of the middle marker, and **-Cia* as the suffix of passive. Following Hohepa (1969) and Hale (1968), Chung (1978) develops the passive-to-ergative reanalysis. Her main arguments for this direction of reanalysis have to do with the wide distribution of passives in Polynesian, the use of **i* with all transitive verbs (thus, not limited to middles), and the use of **e* as a general oblique marker (see also Seiter 1980: Ch. 6; Chung and Seiter 1980).

The opposite view is advanced by Clark (1973, 1976). Clark's arguments for the ergative-to-passive reanalysis rely on demographic evidence (ergative languages are spoken in Western Polynesia, which was settled earlier), distributional evidence (ergativity is found in two out of three branches of Polynesian), and the similarity of the **-Cia* reflexes outside Polynesian—according to Clark, these suffixes marked transitivity of the verb and were later re-analyzed as passive exponents (see Ota 2000 for a development of this view).

In more recent work, Kikusawa (2002, 2003) has further developed Clark's arguments by bringing in more comparative evidence from outside Polynesian. She makes a greater connection between the functions of pronominal clitics and/or agreement markers and the grammatical functions of corresponding nouns doubled by these clitics (or indexed by agreement). The pronominal system of Proto-Oceanic seems to have operated on the basis of accusative alignment. As pronominal elements disappeared, for example, as in Rotuman, nouns developed the accusative pattern in their stead.

In arguing against Kikusawa's proposal, Ball (2008) emphasizes the scarcity of ergative languages in Central Pacific, questions her pronominal evidence, and suggests that the current accusative systems could historically be related to locative patterns, thus backing Chung's analysis of them as middles.

Otsuka (2011) further argues for Clark's position by considering the situation in Eastern Polynesian languages, such as Hawaiian and Māori, more carefully. Under the passive-to-ergative reanalysis, these languages reflect the nominative/accusative case system of Proto-Polynesian, as exemplified by the Tahitian data in (45). Otsuka proposes that these languages are not actually accusative and thus cannot represent the older state. Instead, they have a symmetric voice system that arises naturally from the PPn ergative pattern through increased use of the middle construction shown as the first stage in (56).

There is no clear conclusion at this point, except that Austronesian languages have a great deal to contribute to the diachronic picture as well as the synchronic one.

6. The 'pivot-only' extraction restriction

The essence of this extraction constraint is that the only phrase that can be extracted from a given clause is the most prominent one, commonly referred to as the 'pivot' in the Austronesian literature. Whether the pivot should be analyzed as a grammatical subject or as a topic remains an ongoing debate in the literature, and recent work suggests that the answer may be language-specific (Patrianto & Chen 2024; Lohninger & Katochoritis 2025). See section 4.2.1 for a discussion of how this constraint plays a central role in the syntax of western Austronesian languages

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that feature an Austronesian-type voice system. Below we present a theory-neutral overview of this constraint.

The ‘pivot-only’ constraint is widespread in Austronesian: it occurs in Formosan and Philippine languages, Malagasy, a subset of languages of Indonesia, and many Polynesian languages. Consider the Tagalog examples below. The glosses CM1 and CM2 represent two case markers whose analysis differs depending on whether one adopts an ergative or an accusative approach to Philippine-type languages. See Section 5.1 for an overview.

- (56) a. *Sino ang [b<um>ili/{*-in/*-an/*i-} ng keyk]?* *Tagalog*
 who PIVOT buy<AV>/{*PV/*LV/*CV} INDF.CM2 cake
 ‘Who is the one that bought cake?’
- b. *Ano ang [bi-bilih-in/{*<um>/*-an/*i-} ni Aya]?*
 what PIVOT RED-buy-PV/{*AV/*LV/*CV} PN.CM1 Aya
 ‘What is the thing that Aya will buy?’
- c. *Ano ang [bi-bilih-an/{*<um>/*-in/*i-} ni Aya ng keyk]?*
 what PIVOT RED-buy-LV/{*AV/*PV/*CV} PN.CM1 Aya INDF.CM2 cake
 ‘Where is the place that Aya will buy the cake?’
- d. *Sino ang [i-bi-bili/{*<um>/*-in/*-an} ni Aya ng keyk]?*
 what PIVOT CV-RED-buy/{*<PV>/*PV/*LV} PN.CM1 Aya INDF.CM2 cake
 ‘Who is the one that Aya will buy cake for?’

In some transparently-ergative Polynesian languages such as Tongan or Samoan, this constraint resurfaces as the *absolute-only restriction*. As these languages lack a Philippine-style voice system, adjunct-like phrases such as the locative or instrument cannot be placed as the pivot. The pivot-only restriction is therefore manifested as a competition between core arguments, in which only the absolute may extract. Consider the examples below from Samoan. As (57c) shows, a resumptive pronoun is obligatorily used to enable ergative extraction.

- (57) a. *‘O ai [‘olo‘o tamo‘e]?* *Samoan*
 PRED who PROG run
 ‘Who is running?’ (clefting of intransitive subject, ABS)
- b. *‘O ai [‘olo‘o si‘i e le tama]?*
 PRED who PROG lift ERG the boy
 ‘Who is the boy lifting?’ (clefting of transitive object, ABS)
- c. *‘O ai [‘olo‘o *(ia) si‘i-ina le teine]?*
 PRED who PROG 3SG lift-TR the girl
 ‘Who is lifting the girl?’ (Muāgututi‘a 2018: 12–13) (clefting of transitive subject, ERG)

The restriction has been the springboard for much syntactic theorizing since it was first discussed for Malagasy by Keenan (1972), who tied it to the Malagasy voice system. Since Keenan’s work, the theoretical explanations offered have been, and continue to be, quite diverse. Many accounts of the subject-only restriction continue to be deeply intertwined with explanations of the Austronesian voice system discussed in section 4 above.

For instance, in their minimalist discussion of voice and extraction in Tagalog, Rackowski and Richards (2005) derive the pivot-only restriction from the Phase Impenetrability Condition, plus the claim that in this language, vP forms a phase. The existing voice markers (see *-um-* or *-in-* presented above) are instantiations of different v heads. Rackowski and Richards’ analysis therefore comes close to explicitly maintaining the tight connection between voice and extraction originally posited for Austronesian by Keenan.

In contrast, in Pearson’s (2005) analysis of Malagasy, there simply is no pivot-only restriction. For Pearson, the so-called voices of Malagasy illustrated below are extraction morphology that tracks the grammatical role of the extracted operator that is coindexed with the topic. What is distinctive about Malagasy is that extraction is signaled morphologically in the verb, arguably by wh-agreement, which according to Pearson (2005) functions the same way the wh-agreement works in Chamorro (Chung 1994, 1998). If this approach is on the right track, Malagasy is a language with wh-agreement but no highly articulated voice system as such. The inflection analyzed by others as

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voice instead serves to indicate which DP—subject, direct object, or applicative object—has undergone wh-movement. See Chen (2017) for a similar analysis of Tagalog and three Philippine-type Formosan languages, in which the ‘pivot-only’ constraint is treated as A'-agreement morphology obligatorily present in both topicalization and relativization (including wh-clefts).

The opposite tack to the subject-only restriction is taken by Gerassimova and Sells (2008), who analyze it as applied to wh-constructions in Tagalog. Gerassimova and Sells hypothesize that all wh-constructions in Tagalog are built from relative clauses, but that relativization in this language involves not A-bar-movement but rather A-movement, namely raising. If we adopt that analysis, Tagalog has no wh-movement whatsoever; the subject-only restriction follows from the generalization that A-movement across clauses must target an embedded subject (theoretical implementations of this generalization may vary). The limitation of raising to subjects of the embedding clause is independently well established, thus as a result of the analysis proposed by Gerassimova and Sells (2008), Austronesian languages appear rather unremarkable. In this analysis, the voice markers do what voice markers are supposed to do, namely promote a particular argument to the embedded subject position, thus making it accessible to subject-to-subject raising.

Attempts have been made to broaden the scope of investigation, for instance, by exploring patterns of adjunct extraction in Austronesian languages (see Gärtner et al. 2006). Some Austronesian languages, such as Chamorro, Malagasy, and Indonesian, appear to allow adjuncts to extract freely, as long as the usual island constraints are obeyed; consider Malagasy:

- (58) a. *taiza no nanafina ny lakileko ny zaza?*
 where FOC hide.ACT the key.1SG the child
 b. *taiza no nafenin' ny zaza ny lakileko?*
 where FOC hide.PASS the child the key.1SG
 c. *taiza no nanafenan' ny zaza ny lakileko?*
 where FOC hide.CIRC the child the key.1SG
 ‘Where did the child hide the key?’ (Potsdam 2006: 2160)

In other Austronesian languages, adjunct extraction appears to be severely restricted. For example, in Futunan, the extraction of adjuncts is only possible if the adjunct is resumed by the pronoun *ai* at the extraction site (cf. (Moyses-Faurie 1997b: 27–28):

- (59) a. *le gāne'a [e kau 'eva'eva *(ai)]*
 DET area IMPF 1SG walk AI
 ‘the area where I go for walks’ (Moyses-Faurie 1997b: 75)
 b. *le sele [ke tu'uti *(ai) le ga pane]*
 DET knife PURP cut AI DET CLF bread
 ‘the knife to cut bread’ (Moyses-Faurie 1997b: 27)

We hypothesize that adjunct extraction could ultimately shed quite a bit of light on the peculiarly Austronesian interplay of voice and extraction that we have just surveyed. The difference in adjunct extraction suggests that the explanation for the pivot-only restriction may differ across different Austronesian languages.

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7. Other syntactic phenomena

7.1. Binding patterns and the status of the pivot phrase

A longstanding question in the Western Austronesian literature concerns the syntactic status of the pivot, i.e., the syntactically prominent phrase in a given clause that is indicated by verbal (voice) morphology. While a growing body of literature has revealed that the pivot phrase in prototypical Philippine-type languages shows typical topic properties, Western Austronesian languages known as Indonesian-type have been shown to vary with regard to the behavior of the pivot. For example, while the pivot phrase in Standard Indonesian and Acehnese has been described as behaving like a typical subject, the pivot in Sasak, East Javanese (ISO 639-3 *jav*), and Lamaholot (ISO 639-3 *slp*) has been shown to pattern instead like a topic (see Nagaya 2019; Khairunnisa 2022; Patrianto & Chen 2024, and references therein). A key diagnostic for this distinction is the binding test. While the pivot phrase in many Philippine-type languages cannot function as a binder and may instead be bound by a non-pivot phrase in the same clause, those in languages such as Standard Indonesian and Acehnese may instead constitute a new antecedent for anaphora and demonstrate the hallmarks of a grammatical subject. See also earlier work that discusses the syntactic properties of pivothood in Philippine-type languages: Schachter 1976, Van Valin (1984), Kroeger (1993), Shibatani (1998), and Riesberg (2014).

For binding patterns in Philippine-type and Indonesian-type Austronesian languages, see, among many others, Kroeger (1993), Arka & Wechsler (1996), Arka & Manning (1998), Pearson (2001, 2005), Rackowski (2002), Udayana (2013), Legate (2014), Qomariana (2014), Chen (2017, 2025), Estioca (2020), Khairunnisa (2022) and Patrianto & Chen (2024) for language-specific descriptions. Although disagreements remain over empirical details beyond reflexive binding (for example, concerning crossover effects), a consistent picture emerging from this body of work is that both types of languages (most of which possess true anaphors) are configurational, and that Austronesian-type voice alternations do not alter binding relations within a clause (aside from triggering weak crossover effects in a subset of Philippine-type languages); instead, binding generally follows the thematic hierarchy of arguments within the same clause.¹¹ This is illustrated with the Tagalog examples in (60). As seen below, the binding relations within a ditransitive do not vary for the voice-marking of the clause—both the agent and the recipient consistently bind the theme regardless of voice alternation.

- (60) a. *Nag-bigay si Joy kay Lia ng sarili niya-ng larawan.* Tagalog
 AV.PRF-give PN.PIVOT Joy PN.CM1 Lia INDF.CM2 self 3S.POSS-LK picture
 ‘Joy<sub>j> gave Lia<sub>k> a picture of herself<sub>j/k>.’ (Actor Voice)
- b. *B<sub>in>igy-an ni Joy si Lia ng sarili niya-ng larawan.*
 <PRF>give-LV PN.CM1 Joy PN.PIVOT Lia INDF.CM2 self 3S.POSS-LK picture
 ‘Joy<sub>j> gave Lia<sub>k> a picture of herself<sub>j/k>.’ (Locative Voice)
- c. *I-b<sub>in>igay ni Joy kay Lia ang sarili niya-ng larawan.*
 CV<PRF>givePN.CM1 Joy PN.CM2 Lia PIVOT self 3S.POSS-LK picture
 ‘Joy<sub>j> gave Lia<sub>k> a picture of herself<sub>j/k>.’ (Circumstantial Voice)

Note, however, sporadic cases reported in Pearson (2001), Rackowski (2002), Chen (2025), and Wu (2024) where Philippine-type voice alternation triggers marginal weakest crossover effects and tentatively allows the pivot to serve as a potential binder in variable binding. Consider below two pairs of examples from Malagasy and Tagalog. Where a quantificational theme is not in pivot status, it is unable to bind the pronominal agent, as in (61a–b); shifting the sentence to patient voice, however, could make bound variable reading between the theme and the agent marginally acceptable, as in (62a–b).

¹¹ See, however, sporadic cases reported in Pearson (2001), Rackowski (2002), and Chen (2017), where Philippine-type voice alternation triggers weakest crossover effects and tentatively allows the pivot to serve as a potential binder in variable binding

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- (61) a. *Namangy ny mpianatra tsirairay ny rainy omaly.* Malagasy
 PST.AV.visit DET student each DET father-3 yesterday
 ('His<*i> father visited each student<i> yesterday.') (Pearson 2005: 427)
- b. *Nag-mamahal ang kanyang ama ng bawat anak.* Tagalog
 AV.PRF-love PIVOT 3SG.POSS father INDF.CM2 every child
 'Her<*i> father loves every<i> child.' (Rackowski 2002: 36)
- (62) a. *%Novangian' ny rainy ny mpianatra tsirairay omaly.* Malagasy
 PST.PV.visit DET father-3 DET student each yesterday
 (Marginal: 'His<i> father visited each student<i> yesterday.') (Pearson 2005: 427)
- b. *M<in>mahal ng kanyang ama ang bawat anak.* Tagalog
 <PV.PRF>love DEF.CM1 3SG.POSS father PIVOT every child
 'Her<i> father loves every<i> child.' (Rackowski 2002: 36)

The occasional presence of this effect in some Philippine-type languages has been used as evidence that pivots in these languages function as binders and exhibit subject behaviors. However, it is often overlooked that pivots in the same languages can consistently be bound by a nonpivot agent—meaning that the effect demonstrated in (61)–(62) is better analyzed as instances of weak crossover rather than promotion to subjecthood. See Pearson (2001) and Chen (2017) for specific discussions of this effect. Future investigation of the binding parameters in more Austronesian languages would further inform the level of uniformity among these languages.

In contrast to western Austronesian languages, a striking feature of many Oceanic languages is the absence of dedicated anaphors subject to binding theory principles. Instead, Oceanic languages use a generic pronoun coreferential with the antecedent to produce a reflexive interpretation. For example, in Tongan:

- (63) *'Oku tokanga'i (pē) 'e Mele ia* Tongan
 PRES watch INTENS ERG M 3SG
 (a) 'Mary looks after herself.'
 (b) 'Mary looks after him/her.'

Note that the reflexive interpretation is not categorical and is largely determined by the context. Crucially, the relationship between the binder and the bound constituent is referential, not syntactic, and it is subject to preferences rather than binding theory rules.

The pronoun associated with the antecedent in the same clause can appear with an intensifier or “delimiter”, cf. *pē* in the example above. This intensifier is often the same as a focus marker. The connection between reflexivization and intensifiers has long been noted: intensifiers can be used to reinforce reflexive pronouns (König & Siemund 2000). We hypothesize that the intensifier serves to limit the range of referents available to the pronoun, which facilitates the binding interpretation. Such a function is compatible with the intensifier's role as a focus element because focus restricts the pragmatically available set of alternatives selected for interpretation (Rooth 1992).

The same type of inferred binding with generic pronouns is found in reciprocals as well. For example, in Toqabaqita (ISO 639-3 *mlu*), the reciprocal interpretation is inferred in a clause with a pronominal plural object (or a constituent of the object), similar to the pattern shown for the reflexives. Compare:

- (64) *roo wane kero laba-taqi keeroqa* Toqabaqita
 two man 3DU.NONFUT affect_negatively-TRANS3DU
 (a) 'The two men harm each other.'
 (b) 'The two men harm them (two).'

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There are also a number of morphological strategies used to mark verbs as reciprocals; the most common marking is similar to that of middles or pluractional verbs.

7.2. Questions

7.2.1 Yes-no (polar) questions

In some Oceanic languages, polar questions are marked by a particle which either appears clause-initially or following the predicate.

- (65) *kuh kom mas?* *Kosrae*
 INTERR 2SG sick
 ‘Are you sick?’ (Lee 1975: 328)

Of these languages, some restrict the initial polar question marker from occurring in wh-questions (for example, the Kosrae marker above is limited to yes-no questions only).¹² In some languages where the question particle is initial, it can be analyzed as an embedding predicate, roughly with the meaning ‘to be true or not’ (cf. Bauer 1993: 139-140 and further references therein for Māori), either with an expletive subject or with the embedded clause as subject:

- (66) [_{TP} (*expl*) INTERR [_{TP} ...]]?

Another strategy in marking yes-no questions is an interrogative marker at the right edge of the predicate phrase, for example:

- (67) *na’e lau tohi nai ‘a e leka?* *Tongan*
 PAST read INTERR ABS DET child
 ‘Did the child read?’

Such markers are compatible both with polar and wh-questions. Depending on the language, they have been analyzed as second position clitics (Paul 2001 for Malagasy), phonological clitics (Anderson 2005 for Tagalog), predicate particles (Bauer 1993; Massam 2001), or heads of separate projections (Willson 2007, 2008 for Marshallese). The Marshallese interrogative marker *ke* (Willson 2007, 2008) cannot be question-initial but can appear in a number of sentential positions in a regular yes-no question. In the following example, we show in parentheses all the possible placements of *ke*:

- (68) *Herman e-n (ke) bajjek (ke) kōmman (ke) bade* *Marshallese*
 Herman 3SG-should just make party
eo (ke) ñan er(ke)?
 DET for 3PL
 ‘Should Herman just throw a party for them?’ (Willson 2007, ex. (4))

¹² In other languages, that marker is possible in wh-questions, cf. in Rotuman:

- (i) a. *ka ia noh ‘e Fiti?*
 INTERR 3SG live PRP Fiji
 ‘Does he live in Fiji?’ (Churchward 1940: 30)
 b. *ka tei fā iā?*
 INTERR where man DET
 ‘Where is the man?’ (Churchward 1940: 43)

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Finally, there are some languages where polar questions do not receive any special segmental marking and are characterized by a special prosody only. The distribution of the three main strategies of yes-no question marking in Oceanic languages is not fully known, and better empirical coverage is much needed in this area.

7.2.2 *Wh*-questions

Cross-linguistically *wh*-questions can be formed by using different strategies. One of these strategies is *substitution*, or *wh-in-situ*: the *wh*-phrase remains in place, as in the following Manam (ISO 639-3 *mva*) and Saliba (ISO 639-3 *sbe*) examples, where the *wh*-word appears in the same place as the constituent that is questioned (70), (71). This strategy is common for SOV languages, and the Oceanic languages where it is observed are indeed SOV.¹³

- (70) a. *tama-m ina i-lako?* Manam
 father-2SG where 3SG-go
 ‘Where did your father go?’ (Turner 1986: 78)
- b. *kaiko naita zaiza ka-pile~pile?*
 2SG who with 2SG-speak~REDUPL
 ‘Who are you speaking with?’ (Turner 1986: 74)
- (71) a. *puwaka-ne saha se-he-kai-di?* Saliba
 pig-DET what 3PL-CAUS-eat-3PL.OBJ
 ‘What did they feed the pigs?’ (Margetts 1999: 294, 309)
- b. *bosa labui-wa haedi?*
 basket two-PREV_MENTIONED where
 ‘Where are the two baskets?’ (Margetts 1999: 301)

Displacement or movement, where a *wh*-phrase is moved to some privileged position, typically the front of a clause, is another strategy of *wh*-question formation; we will illustrate it with English:

- (72) ***What*** did you buy ~~*what*~~?

Questions can also be formed using a biclausal construction with a *cleft* or a *pseudo-cleft*. A pseudo-cleft is a biclausal equative construction in which the *wh*-phrase is the predicate and the subject is a nominalized relative clause:

- (73) a. [*The thing you bought*] is *what*?
 b. *What* is [*the thing you bought*]?

A similar construction is the *cleft*, a biclausal impersonal construction in which the *wh*-phrase is a focused part of the predicate and the subject is an expletive:

- (74) [*What*] is it [*that you bought*]?

In predicate-initial languages, the displacement, pseudo-cleft, and cleft strategies may all yield the same word order, with the *wh*-word in the first position. Thus, the following *wh*-question is three-way structurally ambiguous:

¹³ We do not know if all SOV Oceanic languages have *wh-in-situ*; for some, e.g., Manam, there is variation between fronting and in situ. In some cases it is hard to tell because many examples show *wh*-questions of subjects which appear clause-initially.

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- (75) *ko ai na aumai i te puka?* *Pukapukan*
 PRESENTATIONAL who_{PAST} bring ACC DET book
 ‘Who brought the book?’ (Chung 1978: 338)
- a. *ko ai na aumai ai i te puka?* Movement
 b. [_{PredP} ko ai][_{DP} [_{CP} na aumai i te puka] Pseudo-cleft
 c. [_{PredP} ko ai] [_{CP} na aumai i te puka] *expl* Cleft

The ambiguity is exacerbated by the fact that many Oceanic languages have null expletives and have no overt copula, which makes clefts and pseudo-clefts harder to distinguish. Even with careful syntactic analysis, it is difficult to determine which of these strategies of wh-question formation may be employed in a given language. In Potsdam and Polinsky (2011) we propose diagnostics for identifying displacement, clefts and pseudo-clefts. Here we would like to offer some general considerations.

The main observation is that most languages for which we have detailed data use more than one strategy for wh-question formation. For example, in his detailed analysis of Tuvaluan (ISO 639-3 *tvl*) wh-question formation, Besnier (2000: 18) shows that in situ, displacement, and clefting are all available for one and the same constituent, and this seems typical of interrogatives in a number of languages. If there is any preference for clefts/pseudo-clefts, it may be found in questions of core arguments, subject, and object. Adjuncts often appear in situ. Besnier (2000) shows this distribution for Tuvalu, where clefts are preferred with subjects and objects and in situ or fronting, with adjuncts.

Another important generalization has to do with the correlation between predicate-initial word order and the use of (pseudo-)clefts in wh-question formation. Under the predicate-initial structure, the wh-expression can serve as the matrix predicate, and the presuppositional clause is a headless relative in subject position, thus yielding the otherwise available Predicate-Subject order (cf. Paul 2001, 2008; Potsdam 2006, 2009; Potsdam and Polinsky 2011; Davies & Kurniawan 2013, a.o.).

7.3. Negation

Oceanic languages have a wide variety of negation patterns. Here we will discuss two patterns: negative matrix verbs and the expression of negative quantified expressions and negative polarity items. Other common features of Oceanic (and more broadly, Austronesian) languages include the availability of a negative existential which is lexically distinct from the affirmative existential (e.g., in Tuvalu, where *isi* is the positive and *seeai*, negative existential predicate (Besnier 2000: 121, 179))¹⁴; common use of discontinuous negation (Hovdhaugen and Mosel 1999 for Samoan); and a rich inventory of markers expressing prohibition (see Vonen 1999 for Tokelauan (ISO 639-3 *tkl*)).

7.3.1 Negative verbs

A common characteristic of Oceanic languages is the use of a higher negative verb which selects a finite complement. Compare in Fijian, where the higher negative verb *sega* takes a complement clause introduced by the complementizer *ni* and shows the default third person agreement:

- (76) *e sega ni la'o 'o Pita*
 3SG NEG COMP go DET P
 ‘Peter did not go.’ (‘It is not the case that Peter went.’)

Other languages that have negative verbs include most of the Polynesian languages, Teop, and possibly Saliba (Hovdhaugen and Mosel 1999: 6).

¹⁴ Negative existential verbs probably develop from the coalescence of a negative particle and an existential predicate (Hovdhaugen and Mosel 1999: 18).

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The main arguments for analyzing the negative marker as a higher verb which takes the affirmative proposition as its complement are as follows: (a) the negative and the negated verb have independent tense-aspect marking; (b) the negated verb has marking which is characteristic of embedded predication; (c) the negative combines with typical verbal modifiers of a given language; (d) the negative can be followed by a marker of embedded proposition as in the Fijian example above; (e) the negative patterns with other stative verbs (e.g., in Māori—Hohepa 1969: 18-20; Biggs 1969: 76); (f) the negative can be causativized or nominalized using verbal nominalization strategies (e.g., in Tuvalu—Besnier 2000: 179-180); (g) negative predicates can also appear in embedded clauses, just as any other predicates do.

In some languages, negative verbs also allow subject raising (Clark 1976: 85-109; Chung 1978: 132-135; Bauer 1993: 139-141), for instance, in Māori (see also the next section):

- (77) a. *kāore anō [kia whiti te rā]*
 NEG yet COMP shine DET sun
 b. *kāore anō te rāi [kia whiti t_i]*
 NEG yet DET sun COMP shine
 ‘The sun hasn’t risen yet.’ (Chung 1978: 134-135)

Because of the absence of inflectional morphology, it is sometimes difficult to decide whether the negative word in a particular language should be considered a verb or not. Superficial evidence is clearly not enough, and one needs to look for clear morphosyntactic evidence such as that outlined above.

7.3.2 Negative indefinites

Oceanic languages and Austronesian languages more broadly generally lack negative quantified expressions such as ‘nobody’, ‘nothing’, etc. To express the relevant content, these languages use a negative existential construction with the pivot modified by a relative clause, for example:

- (78) *ahiki ta peha te-nam [to nata nana] Teop*
 NEG NON-SPEC one PRP-1EXCL REL know IMPERF:3SG
 ‘None of us knows it.’ (lit.: “There is not one of us who knows it.”) (Mosel and Spriggs 1999: 50)

- (79) *kia foliik [o na axe] Nêlêmwâ*
 NEG.exist thing IRR 1SG see
 ‘I did not see anything/I saw nothing.’ (lit.: “There is no thing that I saw.”) (Bril 1999: 84)

The pattern is inconsistent; it seems absent in some SOV languages (e.g., in Saliba—see Margetts 1999) but is found everywhere else. The pervasiveness of this pattern may be due to the common restriction on subjects in Austronesian: subjects tend to be specific and referential—this is related to the subject-only restriction of Western Austronesian (see Pearson 2005; Gärtner et al. 2006). Under such a restriction the only way to express negative or arbitrary quantification is as the pivot (not subject) of the existential. On a related note, we do not find evidence for free choice items in the subject position; such items also get expressed as pivots of existentials.

7.4. Comparatives

Austronesian languages have much to offer to the ongoing study of the syntax and semantics of comparison. Typological studies, such as Andersen 1983, Stassen 1985, 2013, Dixon 2008, 2012, and Beck et al. 2009 identify a number of strategies for expressing comparison and many are found in Austronesian languages. For example, Kuo & Sung 2010 identifies four types of comparatives in the Formosan language Amis:

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- (78) a. juxtaposition comparative
Ø-fangcal kaku, Ø-tati'ih kisu
 AF-good 1SG.NOM AF-bad 2SG.NOM
 'I am better than you.'
 Lit. 'I am good; you are bad.' (Kuo & Sung 2010: 29)
- b. disjunctive comparative
kaku atu kisu, Ø-kereteng kaku
 1SG and 2SG AF-heavy 1SG.NOM
 'I am heavier than you.'
 Lit. '(Given) I and you, I am heavy.' (Kuo & Sung 2010: 29)
- c. nominal comparative
u kaka aku [ku Ø-fangcal tisuwanan]
 CN older.sibling 1SG.GEN NOM AF-good 2SG.OBL
 'My older brother/sister is better than you.'
 Lit. 'The one who is better than you is my older brother/sister.' (Kuo & Sung 2010: 30)
- d. exceed comparative
mi-ki-kereteng ku widang aku cingranan
 AF-exceed-heavy NOM friend 1SG.GEN 3SG.OBL
 'My friend is heavier than him.' (Kuo & Sung 2010: 31)

Comparatives have not been well documented in Austronesian however, so it is not yet clear which types, if any, predominate (see Vander Klok 2011 on Javanese, Schapper & de Vries 2018 on Melanesian languages, and van den Berg 2018 on the Indonesian language Muna (ISO 639-3 *mnb*)).

A prominent characteristic of Austronesian languages is a lack of overt degree morphology, such as *more-er* in English. Such morphology could be present but covert, or it could simply be absent. The latter might require a semantics for comparison that differs from that proposed for English-like comparatives. Pearson 2010b (see also Beck et al. 2009) has proposed such a semantics for comparatives in Fijian, which also lack an overt degree morpheme and, which she demonstrates, can have different interpretations from their English counterparts:

- (80) *e qase mai vei Meri 'o Pita*
 3SG old DIR PREP Mary DET Peter
 'Peter is older than Mary.' (Pearson 2010b: 2)

Kennedy (2009) calls such comparison implicit comparison, in contrast to explicit comparison in English. An important question for future research is how many Oceanic languages behave like Fijian in having implicit comparison. Hohaus (2010) has proposed that Samoan may be similar. If we find that implicit comparison is common to Oceanic, that may be due either to shared origins or to some structural characteristics common in Oceanic. See Potsdam (2011, 2024), who argues that, despite not requiring degree morphology, Malagasy comparatives represent explicit comparison. See also Vander Klok (2011) for an analysis of attributive comparatives in Javanese, including comparisons with other Western Austronesian languages.

7.5. *Raising, control, and restructuring constructions*

Various Austronesian languages have been described to possess a construction that can be descriptively termed 'raising-to-object'. This construction is characterized by the optional fronting of an embedded phrase into the matrix object position, typically with a CP-selecting knowledge or perception verb in the matrix clause (see, e.g., Malagasy: Paul and Rabaovololona 1998; Pearson 2001, Madurese (ISO 639-3 *mad*): Davies 2005; Tagalog: Law 2011; Sundanese (ISO 639-3 *sun*): Kurniawan 2011; Atayal (ISO 639-3 *tay*)/Tsou (ISO 639-3 *tsu*)/Amis: Liu 2011; Puyuma/Amis/Seediq: Chen & Fukuda 2016, Niuean: Massam 2020). Consider the examples in (83b) from Malagasy and (84b) from Madurese, along with their respective non-raising counterparts in (83a) and (84a).

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- (83) a. *Mihevitra Rabe [fa namaky ny boky ny mpianatra].* *Malagasy*
 AV.think Rabe that PST.AV.read DET book DET student
 ‘Rabe thinks that the student read the book’
- b. *Mihevitra ny mpianatra [ho namaky ny boky] Rabe*
 AV.think DET student PST.AV.read DET book Rabe
 ‘Rabe thinks of the student that (he) read the book’
 or ‘Rabe believes the student to have read the book’ (Pearson 2005: 447)
- (84) a. *Siti ngera bari’ [Hasan melle motor].* *Madurese*
 S AV.think yesterday H AV.buy car
 ‘Yesterday Siti thought Hasan to have bought a car.’ (Davies 2005:648)
- b. *Siti ngera Hasan bari’ [melle motor].*
 S AV.think H yesterday AV.buy car
 ‘Yesterday Siti thought Hasan to have bought a car.’. (Davies 2005:649)

Control constructions remain an understudied topic in Austronesian syntax. See Landau (2013) for a discussion of Tagalog’s control infinitives and Riesberg (2014) for an overview of control constructions in western Austronesian languages. Much recent work has focused on the analysis of a special type of control construction known as the crossed control (Polinsky & Potsdam 2008; Berger 2019; Jeoung 2020, Kroeger & Frazier 2019; Van der Klok & Paul 2021; Nomoto 2021). This phenomenon is attested in a number of western Indonesian languages, where the experiencer that surfaces inside the embedded clause (e.g. ‘mother’ in (85)) is interpreted as the subject of the matrix clause.

- (85) a. *anak itu mau/ingin men-cium ibu.* *Indonesian*
 child that want AV-kiss mother
 ‘The child wants to kiss the mother.’
- b. *anak itu mau/ingin di-cium oleh ibu.*
 child that want PASS-kiss by mother
 I. ‘The child wants to be kissed by the mother.’ control reading
 II. ‘The mother wants to kiss the child.’ crossed reading (Polinsky & Potsdam 2008:1618)

Restructuring infinitives (RIs) are also commonly observed in Austronesian. Similar to those observed in Romance languages, RIs in Austronesian are characterized by long-distance case-licensing, clitic climbing, voice-marking constraints on the embedded verb, and TAM-deficiency. RIs in many western Austronesian languages are known for displaying different patterns of voice-marking constraints, the variation of which remains an ongoing debate in the literature (see, e.g., Chung 2004; Liu 2011; TC Chen 2010; Wu 2012; Kroeger 2014). Consider below examples of RIs from Bunun (ISO 639-3 *bnn*) and Chamorro.

- (86) a. *Tanem-un=as dahu [tu pazikpik-un/*ma-]* *Bunun*
 try-PV=2SG.PIVOT Dahu [LK cheat-PV/*AV]
 ‘Dahu tried to cheat you..’ (Wu 2013:76)
- b. *Tinituhun esta si Dolores kinässi as Antonio.* *Chamorro*
 NPL.RL.IN.PASS.begin already Dolores NPL.RL.IN.PASS.tease OBL Antonio
 ‘Antonio began to tease Dolores.’ (Chung 2004:204)

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(Lit. ‘Dolores was begun to be teased by Antonio.’)

Example (86a) indicates clitic climbing due to the absence of a clause-boundedness effect: the second-person object that is thematically linked to the restructuring infinitive surfaces as a pronominal on the matrix predicate. Examples (86a–b) further indicate long-distance case licensing and a voice-marking constraint within the RI: the embedded object is case-marked as a matrix object, and the RI bears a fixed voice morphology that precludes further alternation. This parallels the voice-concord requirement reported for Bunun and Chamorro, where the embedded verbal morphology must match the matrix voice. For further discussion of RIs and their morphosyntactic variation in Austronesian, see Wurmbrand (2014) for a detailed review.

Due to space limitations, we are unable to provide a fuller discussion of other complementation strategies in Austronesian languages or of additional topics in Austronesian syntax that have attracted attention in recent work—such as raising, postverbal scrambling in predicate-initial languages, and the structure of relative clauses, pseudo clefts, and ditransitives, as well as long-distance extraction, possessor extraction, and non-DP A'-extraction. Many of these issues are explored in detail in recent proceedings of the Austronesian Formal Linguistics Association.

8. Conclusion

In this chapter we have presented an overview of major syntactic issues in the analysis of Austronesian languages with special emphasis on languages of Oceania. We paid particular attention to several typologically unusual aspects of syntactic design that recur in different subgroups of the Austronesian family, including the widespread predicate-first (head-initial) word order, articulated voice systems, and articulated systems of possessive marking. We have also highlighted those aspects of Austronesian syntax that remain understudied, such as the extraction restrictions observed in various Austronesian languages and the phenomena of restructuring and crossed control, which await a more systematic comparison across languages. We hope that the descriptions above have provided a sense of the empirical landscape and the theoretical issues that they raise for future research. Future investigation of understudied languages and a more in-depth look into major directionality in the change of Austronesian syntax would shed more light on the degree of variation and uniformity in the syntax of these languages.

List of non-Leipzig abbreviations

AV: actor voice
 CLF.DRINK: drink relational classifier
 CLF.FOOD: food relational classifier
 CLF.GEN: general relational classifier
 CM: case marker
 CORE: core case
 CV: circumstantial voice
 DEF: definite
 DEP_TNS: dependent tense
 DIR: directional particle
 EA: article/case particle
 FAM: familiar third person
 IMM_FUT: immediate future
 INAL: inalienable

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INDF: indefinite

INTR: intransitive

IRR: irrealis

LE: Acehnese case/voice particle

LV: locative voice

MV: middle voice

OBJ: object

PERS: personal determiner

PIVOT: syntactically privileged phrase

POSS.A: A-series possessive (alienable)

POSS.O: O-series possessive (inalienable)

PV: patient voice

REAL: realis

RP: resumptive particle

SG.PIVOT: singular pivot

SJV: subjunctive

SUBJ: subject

T/A: tense–aspect marker

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