

## THE FOURTH FOCUS

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The four-focus structure of the Austronesian verb is found in the Philippines and in areas not far from the Philippine group, i.e. Taiwan, Minahasa, and (to a certain degree) Sabah. If it were present only in more or less neighbouring countries, we might imagine that the structure had developed secondarily in this area and did not belong to Proto-Austronesian (PAN).

However, we also find it as far off as in Malagasy. By comparative study of the phonetic development this language requires a place in the subgroup South-Eastern Barito, which has its other members in South-Eastern Kalimantan (Dahl 1977b), and we believe that the ancestors of the Malagasys must have emigrated from there at about 400 A.D. (Dahl 1951:367-9).

With the exception of Ma'anyan, which does not have the four-focus structure, the grammars of the South-Eastern Barito languages were hitherto unknown. It may be questioned whether phonetic similarities justify assigning languages to a common subgroup when fundamental grammatical features differ radically. Grammatical correspondence has been considered as a decisive argument for linguistic affinity.

However, gender, case, and number are no doubt basic features in Indo-European noun structure, and conjugation in that of the verb. How much is left of that in modern western languages? In English gender has disappeared, of the cases we have only a restricted use of the s-form left of the different genitive terminations, and -s is also the only plural termination left. Conjugation appears only in the third person singular of the present tense. French has still two genders, but no trace of case, and in spoken French the noun has generally no plural form. The article, a new part of speech, marks number

and gender. The Scandinavian languages have genders and plural forms, but not conjugation, and of the cases only a restricted use of the s-forms in the genitive. However, southern German, belonging to the same subgroup as English, has gender, number, case and conjugation in modern use. So also has Icelandic, which separated from Norwegian only a thousand years ago.

This shows that grammatical features, even those which may be considered as the most basic in the proto-language, may disappear in some languages, and may be conserved in others. Common phonetic evolution, like the well-known consonantic changes in ancient Teutonic, are surer criteria for subgrouping than grammatical features.

The grammatical structure of Malagasy and Ma'anyan differs, but this is insufficient reason for denying that they belong to the same subgroup, since their phonetic development is identical up to a certain point in their evolution.

If the four-focus structure is present in different subgroups, it may be possible to consider it as belonging to PAN. Two things may support such a hypothesis: more or less fossil affixes in many languages without this structure, and common details in the function of the forms in focus languages.

The occurrence of the infix \*-um- and the suffixes \*-ən and \*-an is so common in Austronesian languages that no documentation should be necessary here. We shall in this study in all essentials examine details in the use of the fourth focus.

The functions of the first three focuses are fairly clear. Actor focus (AF) has the performer of the action in focus, goal focus (GF) the object that undergoes the action, and referent focus (RF) the person in whose interest the action is made, or the place where the action is performed.

The fourth focus, generally called instrument focus (IF) got its name because it focuses something used for performing the action, for instance an instrument. In Malagasy it has the formative a- prefixed, e.g.:

A-tápaka ny tady ny antsy.  
a-cut the rope the knife

*'The knife is the instrument used to cut the rope'.*

Ny famaky a-kapa ny hazo.  
the axe a-hew the tree

*'The axe with which the tree is hewn'.*

A-solo ny boky very itý.  
 a-substitute the book lost this  
 'This is used to replace the lost book'.

However, this is not the only use of the form, in Malagasy not even the most common one. It is indeed more frequently used to focus the object undergoing the action, when used with wordbases expressing a displacement, a movement,<sup>1</sup> e.g.:

A-lefa amin'ny paotra ny taratasy.  
 a-send with the mail the letter  
 'The letter is being sent by mail'.

A-sóndrotra ny tánana.  
 a-lift-up the hand  
 'The hand is lifted up'.

We also find the same use of the form in other languages, for instance in Cotabato Manobo. To the following list of Cotabato Manobo wordbases (Kerr 1965:25) taking the IF form when the object displaced is in focus, I add Malagasy wordbases with the same meaning if they have the same construction:

Cotabato Manobo	Malagasy	
begay		'give sth. <sup>2</sup> to someone'
hated		'take sth. to some place or person'
tayal	tólotra	'hand sth. to someone'
tagu	tao	'place sth. in some place'
tená	pétraka	'place sth. on something'
tudak	fafy	'plant grain in the ground'
tagkes	fátotra	'tie sth. to another thing'
sangget	hántona	'suspend sth. from some place'
seday	tókana	'place sth. apart from others'
tabel	vela	'leave sth. at some place'
lebeng	lévina	'bury sth. in the ground'
sagdeng		'slope, lean sth. against sth.'
toyol	hínjitra	'extend sth. towards someone'
todo	toro	'point, show sth. to someone'

In Cotabato Manobo these wordbases have the prefix *i-*, in Malagasy the prefix *a-*. They thus have the same form as IF in both languages, but not the same function. To distinguish it from the function expressed in the name instrument focus, we may call it moving object focus (MOF).

James Sneddon<sup>3</sup> has informed me in private correspondence that the same phenomenon is found in all the Minahasan languages. These are

related to the Philippine languages, but according to his findings they lie outside the Philippine group. From Tondano he gives the following examples, which I compare with Malagasy wordbases with similar meanings and the same construction:

Tondano	Malagasy	
sebok		'bail water'
rura?	rorá	'spit sth. out'
tea?		'throw sth. away'
wee		'give, put sth.'
wareng	vérina	'return sth.'
todo	tósika	'push sth.'
tanem		'plant sth.'
ra?ray		'drop sth.'
wangker	vidy	'sell sth.'

All these words indicate a displacement. But Sneddon stresses that in Minahasan the displacement is always away from the actor. In Malagasy too this is often the case, e.g. a-tósika 'be pushed' with the MOF prefix a-, but taríh-ina, sintón-ina 'be drawn, pulled' with the GF suffix -ina.

In Malagasy however, the movement is not always away from the actor, e.g. a-téline 'be swallowed' is within the actor, a-findra 'be moved' in any direction, to or from the actor. In some cases the movement is only a shift of position, e.g. a-hódina 'be rotated', a-hóhoka 'be turned upside down', a-fótitra 'be turned in the opposite direction', a-horírana 'be turned on its side', a-tsángana 'be erected, raised up', a-kátóna 'be closed, shut (as a door)', a-híratra ny maso 'the eyes are opened'. By a-vóaka 'be brought out', a-íditra 'be brought in' the movement is often with the actor, the actor carrying the object focused.

With the wordbase leha 'to go' the focus is on the way that the actor goes. In this case it is not the focused item that moves, but the actor, e.g.:

Io lálana io no h- a-leha-nao.  
 that way that no future a-go you  
 'It is that way you shall go'.<sup>4</sup>

A special case is the wordbase tao, cited above with the meaning 'to place, to put'. In this meaning the form a-tao is quite regular. But the verb also means 'to do, to make', e.g.:

Inona no a-tao-nao?  
 what no a-do you  
 'What are you doing, making?'

Answer:

Hárona no a-tao-ko.  
basket no a-make I  
'A basket is what I am making'.

Or in another situation:

Mieritréritra aho.  
consider I  
'I am reflecting'.

In this case there is no movement in the picture. The reason seems to be that two Austronesian wordbases have merged in Malagasy tao:

1) PAN \*tayuq 'to put, place' with identical meaning and regular loss of \*y and \*q. 2) PAN \*t<sub>2</sub>aqu[h] 'know, be capable of doing sth.' with regular loss of \*q and a possible \*h, and only a minor change in meaning. After the merger both have acquired the regular form of the first one, with a-.

We find the same use of the fourth-focus form in many languages. From Samar Leite Visayan Wolff (1973:79) gives the following example:

?i-h-in-átag ku ?a kwarta sa-kanya.  
was-given-away by-me T money to him  
'I gave the money to him'.

Bloomfield (1917:248-9) shows many cases of the object in focus in Tagalog, among others:

In-i-yalís nilà aṅ háraṅ naṅ daàn.  
removed they T obstruction of road  
'They removed the obstruction on the road'.

I-b-in-ilangò naṅ hukòm si Hwàn.  
put-into-prison by judge T John  
'The judge has put John into prison'.

I-silid mò sa bòte aṅ àlak.  
put you into bottle T wine  
'Put the wine into the bottle'.

I-s-in-ampày nya sa kanya ṅ balíkat aṅ kúmot.  
slung he on his ṅ shoulder T blanket  
'He slung the blanket across his shoulder'.

From P.B. Naylor (1975:30-1) I quote the following:

I-t-in-apon ni Juan ang isda.  
was-thrown by John T fish  
'John threw the fish away'.

I-l-in-agay ni Juan ang isda sa plato.  
was-placed by John T fish to plate  
'John put the fish on the plate'.

In-uw*i* ko ang aking trabaho.  
*was-taken-home by-me T my work*  
*'I took my work home'.*

The last example shows that the object is not always taken away from the actor, and that it may accompany him as in Malagasy.

Reid (1966:31) gives the following example of the same phenomenon in Ivatan:

Qi-asngen no tao qo libro do vahay.  
*draw-near by man T book to house*  
*'The man is taking a book near to the house'.*

Sangir does not seem to have the instrument in focus, but has a verbal form with the prefix *i-*. According to Adriani (1893:86) this form is passive. Thus it has the object in focus. The old GF suffix *\*-ən* has merged in meaning with the RF suffix *\*-an*. Both are used with RF focus (Adriani 1893:155) in accordance with a rule of dissimilation (Adriani 1893:40).

This evolution seems to have taken place as follows: when *\*-ən* lost its original function of GF, this function was taken over by the prefix *i-*. It is however almost certain that this is due to the *i-* form already having the object in focus when the verb indicates a movement, as we have seen in other languages. The above-mentioned evolution in Sangir thus lends further support to the hypothesis that this use of *i-* is an old Austronesian function.

We have seen that in nearly all the languages quoted the formative is the prefix *i-*. In Formosan languages we find *si-* in Paiwan (Ferrell 1972:121), *s-* in Atayal (Egerod 1965:269, 1966:347, Ferrell 1972:124), and *is-* in Bunun (Ferrell 1972:123). This allows us to construct PAN *\*si-*. Atayal has lost the vowel, and in Bunun we have metathesis. Outside Formosa the ordinary reflex of PAN *\*s* is  $\emptyset$  or *h*.

In Malagasy the prefix is *a-*, and in this language *a* is never a regular reflex of PAN *\*i*. In 1951 I suggested that the change had come because an active prefix had also become *i* (< PAN *\*a<sub>γ</sub>*). The language had two synonymic locative prefixes to the noun: *i-* and *a-*. I assumed that the IF prefix *i-* had been identified with the homonymous locative prefix, and the verbal *i-* had changed into its 'synonym' *a-* to avoid confusion with the active *i-* (Dahl 1951:200). The weak point of this hypothesis was that although the active prefix *i-* exists in Ma'anyan, there is no trace of it in Malagasy. If it existed in Proto-Malagasy, the IF prefix must at any rate have been much more frequent, and should therefore have had much more chance of surviving than the active *i-*, which is also rare in Ma'anyan.

Since that time the study of Formosan languages has advanced. Amis has the IF prefix *sa-* (Ferrell 1972:122). Saaroa has the prefix *saa-* [sa:] in a focus called special focus (SF), the function of which is not yet clear (Tsuchida 1976:71). In one of the examples given by Tsuchida it is clearly instrumental:

Saa-ləvə-a           ami       muu-capi na aʔaina isa.  
SF *go-by-means of is-said* AF *drop to woman her*  
'(She) came down on (it) to her mother, it is said'.<sup>5</sup>

In another example (Tsuchida 1976:77) the word focused is the object:

Saa-ʔamərə ami       ka ʔarəmə.  
SF *burn is-said by ant-eater*  
'The ant-eater burned it, it is said'.

As the *a* of these prefixes cannot be deduced from PAN \**i*, we must consider \**Sa-* as their proto-form. The use seems to be the same as that of PAN \**Si-*. Does that mean that PAN had two parallel forms of the fourth focus prefix, or is another explication possible?

We know that in the evolution of the Indo-European languages cases have merged so that the number of cases has been reduced, some case formatives taking over functions from others which have disappeared. If similar mergers have occurred in Austronesian, it is possible that PAN had two different focus prefixes, \**Si* and \**Sa-*, the one with the function IF, the other with the function MOF, and that these have merged in all known languages. In our present state of knowledge this cannot, however, be considered as more than a tentative hypothesis.<sup>6</sup>

Malagasy *a-* is a quite regular reflex of PAN \**Sa-*. In the past tense the prefix is *n-a-*. Many languages have an *n-* prefixed to IF *i-*, or *-in-* infixes after the first consonant (in some languages also *in-* prefixed before a vowel) in the past tense or the perfective aspect, for instance in Sangir (Adriani 1893:86-7). Ma'anyan has the prefix *na-* as formative of its passive. This language does not possess the four-focus structure, but only active and passive forms of the verb, nor has it any tense forms. We may therefore suggest that the language has lost the suffixes of GF and RF and the distinction of tense or aspect, and retained the past tense prefix of the fourth focus as formative of its passive. If so, Ma'anyan *na-* is identical with the Malagasy prefix *a-* in its past tense form *na-*. But as in Sangir this evolution could scarcely have taken place if the *na-* form had not very often had the object of the action in focus, as is the case in MOF.

Similarities also occur between Malagasy and Formosan languages in another verbal form in the focus system. The imperative of the non-actor focuses in Malagasy is formed with the suffixes *-i* and *-o* in accordance with a rule of dissimilation. I have shown (Dahl 1951:227-8) parallels to the *-i* in other languages in verbal forms with relation to a place. In one Malagasy dialect it is used only instead of the suffix *-an*, thus as imperative of what is or has been RF.

In Formosan languages we find the suffix *-aw* in Paiwan and Amis, *-au* in Atayal and Kanakanabu, *-u* in Saaroa, all of which would become *-o* in Malagasy. In Paiwan, Amis and Atayal it forms an aspect of an uncertain or probable future (Ferrell 1972:122-4). In Kanakanabu and Saaroa it is called imperative (Tsuchida 1976:44 and 70), and the realisation of an imperative lies in the future. In all these languages (except in Kanakanabu, which has merged GF and RF) the form belongs only to GF. We may thus assume that Malagasy *-o* originally belonged to GF, and that it is identical with *-aw/au/u* in Formosan, and thus construct PAN *\*-au* as formative of an unaccomplished aspect and/or imperative mode of GF.

In Paiwan, Amis and Atayal we find *-ay* as suffix of the same form in RF, in Saaroa it is *-i*. In both focuses Saaroa has thus changed the diphthong into a single vowel. But the *-i* in Malagasy and other western languages does not seem to be identical with Formosan *-ai*.

We have found that besides the instrument the fourth focus in the languages of the Philippines, Minahasa and Madagascar may have a moving object as topic. In Ma'anyan and Sangir we have seen forms with the object in focus, formed with prefixes that may earlier have been formatives of the fourth focus. It seems natural to think of the moving object as responsible for the change.

Since Dempwolff, much work has been done in diachronical phonemics and phonetics, but comparative Austronesian grammar has been largely neglected<sup>7</sup> since Brandstetter's tentatives. What has been treated here is only one of the many problems of PAN grammar. In recent years many new synchronical studies of grammar have been made. This opens the ways for new diachronical studies of comparative grammar to be undertaken.

However, in a family with so many members as the Austronesian it seems impossible for one person to know the grammatical structure in the multitude of languages that ought to be compared. In order to advance in diachronical grammar collaboration among scholars working in different subgroups would be highly desirable.



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N O T E S

1. Wolff (1973:79) mentions focuses of three meanings: instrument, beneficiary and recipient, but without indicating the character of the beneficiary.
2. sth. = something, stands here for a thing or a person being displaced, and focused by the verb.
3. See studies by Sneddon in the bibliography.
4. When you are moving along a path, a road, it seems to move towards you. Perhaps that is the idea behind this construction.
5. Tsuchida 1976:75. (It) replaces a bamboo mentioned in a preceding clause, and focused by *saa-ləvə-a* without being repeated or replaced by a pronoun in the present clause.
6. In the discussion following the paper at SICAL, R.D. Zorc mentioned another possible function of \**Sa-* than a fifth focus. It may be a potential/accidental aspect of the \**Si-* form. He set up the following PAN scheme from Philippine and Formosan languages:

	AF	GF	RF	IF
Realis Statement	-um- m-	-ən	-an	Si-
Imperative		-au	-ai	
Irrealis Negative	∅	-a	-i	-án
Potential Accidental	ka-	(n)a-	ka- -an	Sa-

7. An exception is Wolff's study.

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