

Notes on the history of 'focus' in Austronesian languages

ROBERT BLUST

1 Identifying the phenomenon¹

The grammatical category of focus in Austronesian (An) languages has been a source of descriptive and theoretical confusion for the better part of a century. McKaughan (1962), like many others working in Philippine linguistics, considered focus to be the grammatical relationship between the main verb and the topic of a sentence. Speaking of Maranao in the southern Philippines he observed that:

when a substantive phrase is not the topic, its grammatical relationship to the verb is indicated either by particles, or by certain pronoun forms...Cutting across the grammatical relations marked by these particles is another, indicating that a certain substantive is the topic of the sentence, or has a primary relation to the verb...The relation of special emphasis, amplification, or topic may be called primary, since nontopic relations and verb vary depending upon the 'voice' of the topic. (pp.47, 48)

Elsewhere (1971:158ff.), speaking of Philippine-type languages in general he suggested that:

The most prominent grammatical feature, at least to the western observer, is that which indicates grammatical relations between the verb and the topic of the sentence. To mark these relations, the verb contains 'case-marking' morphemes indicating that the topic is the actor, goal, indirect referent, or instrument of the action denoted.

Two things are noteworthy about these remarks. The first is the quotative qualification of the terms 'voice' and 'case-marking', a practice which suggests that McKaughan did not feel completely comfortable with the use of either term alone as a description of the function of the verbal affixes in question. The second is the use of both terms to refer to the same phenomenon. From an Indo-European standpoint the notions of voice and case are fundamentally distinct, but in Philippine-type focus systems the two are fused in an unfamiliar union which has caused much vacillation and uncertainty.

¹ Elizabeth Zeitoun supplied many of the references to unpublished theses on the Formosan aboriginal languages, together with information on the terminology used to describe focus in these works. Although I am much indebted to her, she bears no responsibility for any of my conclusions.

It is for just this reason that the term 'focus' was adopted by members of the Summer Institute of Linguistics as a neutral alternative to the more familiar terms from Indo-European languages such as English. In her discussion of the verb system of Agta in the northern Philippines, Phyllis Healey (1960:103, fn.11) credits Alan Healey (1958) with coining the term 'focus':

Elsewhere in Philippine linguistics this phenomenon has usually been termed "voice", as, for example, in Howard McKaughan's "The inflection and syntax of Maranao verbs" (1958). Because there is no automatic translation equivalent between the two English voices and the three Agta ones, the term "focus" was adopted to emphasise the non-English nature of Agta grammar.

McKaughan (1970) points out that the usage appears at about the same time in Dean (1958).

Healey's remarks highlight another mismatch between the grammatical category of focus in Philippine-type languages and the more familiar category of voice. Most Indo-European languages have just two voices, an active and a passive. If focus is treated as voice the situation in Philippine-type languages is disconcertingly different from that in English, since most of these languages have an active and *three* passives. Moreover, where statistical data are available it is clear that the active voice occurs with a lower text frequency than the passives as a group, and may be less frequent than the direct passive ('Patient Focus') alone. It was this embarrassment of riches and apparent downgrading of the actor as much as the haziness of the voice/case distinction that drove many researchers on Philippine languages to seek a terminological innovation which might avoid the problems associated with use of the term 'voice'.

Although descriptions of Philippine languages began to appear as early as the sixteenth century through the efforts of the Spanish friars, these adhered closely to the framework of Latin grammar. The first description of a Philippine-type grammatical system in a non-traditional framework is evidently Adriani's (1893) grammar of Sangir, a member of the Philippine subgroup of Austronesian languages spoken in northern Sulawesi. Adriani's approach was clearly inspired by van der Tuuk's (1864-1867) classic grammar of Toba Batak. Although the structure of the Batak languages of Sumatra is somewhat different from that of Philippine languages, van der Tuuk spoke of three types of 'circumstantial passive' constructions. Despite the verbal associations of the term 'passive' van der Tuuk classified the passives of Toba Batak as substantives. Very similar ideas are reflected by Adriani (1893:188):

The active and passive forms in Sangir are sharply distinguished. The active, as has already often been noted, is actually the only verbal form, the passive is a noun, and the imperative likewise; the distinction between active and passive in the latter is thus observed only in speech (translation mine).

Adriani goes on to state that in Sangir there are three sorts of passive: simple passive, local passive, and subjective passive.

Shortly after the beginning of the twentieth century Blake (1906) pointed out that in Tagalog the same types of relationships which are marked by prenominal particles in non-topic arguments are marked by verbal affixes in topic arguments. It would seem to follow, then, that for topics at least case relations are marked by verbal affixes. In what is often regarded as a classic work, Bloomfield (1917) described Tagalog as having four voices: an active marked by *mag-*, *mang-* or *-um-*, a direct passive marked by *-in*, an instrumental passive marked by *i-*, and a local passive marked by *-an*.

Although the connection is generally overlooked, it seems clear that Bloomfield's description of Tagalog focus as voice was simply a continuation of the Dutch tradition

initiated by van der Tuuk and first applied to Philippine-type languages by Adriani in 1893. Perhaps in deference to Bloomfield's more prominent position in the field of linguistics Blake (1925) modified his earlier analysis in the direction that Bloomfield took, but spoke of three passive 'themes' rather than voices, evidently feeling some discomfort at the notion of multiple passives. Nonetheless, five years later Blake (1930) returned to his original position that the focus affixes of Tagalog verbs are case markers. Blake's vacillation provides perhaps the first indication in the literature that, despite its convenience, the term 'voice' is problematic in relation to Philippine-type languages.²

Although the languages of Sulawesi south of the Gorontalic group become progressively less Philippine-like, some of these can be described in general terms as having a Philippine-type syntax. For Mori of southeast Sulawesi Barsel (1994:65) uses the term 'case' to describe something highly reminiscent of focus:

Case is defined here as the different relations that the NPs of a clause, including the NPs of locative phrases, have to the predicator. It is analyzed on two levels. Firstly, case refers to the grammatical functions of the NPs, which are language-specific to Mori and marked by inflection on the predicate and by syntax. Second, it refers to their semantic functions, which are a set of situational roles.

One reason that the voice/case distinction appears to be so difficult to make in Philippine-type languages is that pronominal arguments are formally different depending upon their case relationship to the verb, whereas in many languages nominal arguments are not. Thus, in Tagalog *ang* marks a focussed nominal argument (for common nouns) regardless of its relationship to the verb (actor, patient, location, instrument, etc.). If these semantic roles are seen as case relationships then it is clear that they are marked in the verb, not in the pronominal particle *ang*. But traditional notions of case derived from the structure of Indo-European languages see case-marking as a property of noun phrases, not of verbs. Ramos (1971:16) states the matter succinctly:

These relationships tying noun phrases in the Tagalog sentence to verb centers are indicated by affixes in the verb rather than on the noun and by particles introducing noun phrases. Affixes in Tagalog verbs mark case relationships between the verb and the subject of the sentence, while the particles introducing noun phrases mark the same kinds of relationships, but do so between verbs and non-subject noun phrases...At least three terms have been used to describe the verb affixes referred to above: focus, voice and case.

All three of these terms continue to be used up to the present for what is essentially the same grammatical category. Appendix 1 (which does not pretend to be complete) provides a summary of terms used for this phenomenon by various researchers since Adriani. An inspection of Appendix 1 shows that the term 'focus' is used in 25 sources, 'voice' in 28, 'case' in eight, 'topicalisation' in three, and 'theme', 'verb class', 'recentralisation' and

² Schachter (1990:940ff.), who suggests the terminological innovation 'trigger' for the focussed nominal argument and 'trigger system' for the general phenomenon of focus in Tagalog, makes this point with particular clarity. Among other things he notes that 'the arguments that can be chosen as trigger show a much wider range of semantic roles than the arguments that can be chosen as subject in typical voice systems and consequently there are many more distinct verb forms than a voice system's typical two... Secondly, in voice systems the active can generally be regarded as the unmarked voice by virtue of its frequency, unrestricted distribution and the like. But Tagalog actor-trigger clauses are not unmarked in relation to their non-actor-trigger counterparts. Indeed, the latter turn out to be generally more frequent in texts and to have fewer distributional restrictions. For these reasons, it seems best not to describe the Tagalog trigger system as a voice system.'

'trigger' in one each. Since terminological usages tend to be transmitted from teacher to student, it is impossible to treat each of the above choices of terminology as independent. Nonetheless it does appear that 'focus' and 'voice' are about equally common, with 'case' a distant third. It is noteworthy that several writers (Blake, McKaughan, Schachter, Prentice) changed their terminology over time.

A number of more recent analyses see Philippine-type languages as ergative, and as a result have a fundamentally different view of the nature of focus. Starosta (1988:185), for example, whose views can only be fully understood within the context of his Lexicase theory, suggests that:

In ergative Austronesian languages of the Philippines, the 'focus' system is just a relatively elaborate verbal derivation mechanism for recentralization, that is, for reinterpreting an actant as Patient.

These definitions say nothing about how we distinguish Austronesian languages which have a focus system from those that do not. Throughout the literature there is an essentially implicit assumption that a language must have at least two morphologically distinguished 'passives' to qualify for inclusion in the typological category of 'Philippine-type focus language'. For convenience we can call these 'three-term systems'. A language such as Tagalog, which distinguishes actor, Patient, Locative and Instrumental/Benefactive focuses by distinct verbal affixes, thus exemplifies a 'four-term system'. While three-term systems may be necessary for meeting the definition 'Philippine-type language', they are not sufficient, since some languages, such as Malay, have two morphologically distinguished passives but are not considered to have a Philippine-type syntax. The essential difference in this case is that the two passives of Malay apply to arguments having identical case relationships to the verb while the multiple passives of Philippine-type languages normally do not.³

2 How old is focus in Austronesian?

Wolff (1973) reconstructed a system of four voice contrasts for PAN. Omitting some details, and correcting his Instrumental passive from PAN **i-* to PAN **Si-*, PMP **i-*, the core system of verbal affixes included the following:

- *-um-* active
- *-en* direct passive
- *-an* local passive
- *Si-* instrumental passive

Apart from **-en* each of these voice-marking affixes (in Wolff's terms) could co-occur with the past marker **-in-*: **C-in-um-VCVC* (or **C-um-in-VCVC*), **C-in-VCVC-an*, **Si-C-in-VCVC*. By contrast, **-en* had a zero allomorph in past constructions: **C-in-VCVC*. In effect, then, the tense/aspect marker **-in-* assumed a portmanteau function in the past of the direct passive, simultaneously marking voice and tense/aspect.

³ Various writers, as McFarland (1976:v) have pointed out that the semantic roles marked by verbal affixes in typical focus languages such as Tagalog must be understood as canonical types which allow some variation and, indeed, crossover. Much the same appears to have been the case in PAN, at least for the Locative focus (Blust 1996).

Wolff's reconstruction is static in the sense that he is concerned only with inferring a system at the PAN stage, without reference to the types of changes that affected it during its subsequent evolution. It is important to recognise that in many Malayo-Polynesian (MP) languages — but not in Formosan languages — the actor focus may be morphologically marked in more than one way. While a reflex of **-um-* marks actor focus in most attested focus languages, many languages that have been called 'Western Malayo-Polynesian' (Philippines, western Indonesia–Malaysia, Malagasy, Chamorro, Palauan) use reflexes of the prefixes **maR-* and/or **maŋ-* in a similar function. In Malagasy **-um-* is reflected only as a fossilised or nearly fossilised element in a handful of verbs, the marking of actor focus being handled almost entirely by reflexes of **maŋ-*.⁴ PMP thus evidently had at least two and perhaps three patterns of affixation for marking the actor focus. In some languages, such as Kelabit, the reflex of **-um-* is associated with intransitive verbs, and the reflex of **maŋ-* with transitive/causative verbs, as in *ebhen* 'sinking into the earth, subsiding': *m-ebhen* 'to subside, sink of its own accord': *ng-ebhen* 'to push a stick into the ground, a needle into the skin, etc.', *layuh* 'wilting, withering': *l-em-ayuh* 'to wilt, wither, as a plant in the sun': *nge-layuh* 'to make something wither, as by placing it close to the fire', or *turun* 'descending': *nurun* 'to lower something, as a ladder from a house', *t-em-urun* 'to descend, as a ladder'. As noted by Mead (this volume), in the Bungku-Tolaki and Muna-Buton languages of southeast Sulawesi, reflexes of PMP **-um-* and **maŋ-* are distinguished along very different parameters: both mark transitive verbs, but the former co-occurs with indefinite objects and the latter with definite objects. Insofar as he is referring to the simple contrast between two verbal affixes which can potentially occur on the same stem Mead is certainly correct in observing that these languages have 'preserved a living distinction between Proto Malayo-Polynesian **maN-* and **um-*.' With regard to the functional distinction associated with them, however, this Sulawesi usage seems almost certainly to be innovative. It is an odd and still poorly understood fact that PAN **-um-* can only be securely reconstructed in intransitive verbs such as **q-um-uzaN* 'to rain', **k-um-aen* 'to eat', or **N-um-anuy* 'to swim'. This leaves the question of how transitive verbs were marked in PAN obscure, unless transitivity was restricted to non-actor focus constructions.

One other point deserves some notice. In Austronesian focus languages generally agency and possession are marked in the same way. In other words, the agent of non-actor focus verbs co-occurs with the genitive marker, usually a reflex of PAN **ni* 'genitive of human nouns; agent of non-actor focus verbs'. As a consequence of this system of marking grammatical relationships the noun/verb distinction becomes blurred. As noted above, Adriani considered the 'passives' of Sangir to be nouns, a view that he may well have taken over from van der Tuuk's earlier analysis of Toba Batak. To accommodate this observation Starosta, Pawley and Reid (1982) argued — contrary to Wolff (1973) — that the focus system of Philippine-type languages evolved from a PAN system of nominalisation in which certain derived nouns were analogically reinterpreted as verbs. As noted by Blust (1998a) there are serious problems with this analysis, and it is almost certain that Wolff's reconstruction provides a more accurate account of the focus morphology of PAN. Nonetheless, the alternative offered by Starosta, Pawley and Reid has the merit of recognising that bases carrying 'passive' affixation may be nouns in given syntactic contexts. The key expression here is 'given syntactic contexts', since in virtually all Austronesian focus

⁴ Dahl (1951:163) notes that in the Sakalava dialect of Malagasy the infix *-um-* is found in several intransitive verbs. While it is rare, it still must be considered a functional morpheme. In the standard dialect of Merina, by contrast *-om-* apparently is best regarded as defunct.

languages non-actor focus forms may be it *either* verbal or nominal, sensitive to the syntactic environment in which they are found, a point made forcefully for Tagalog by Himmelmann (1987:78ff.).

This system, diverging in various ways, has survived in many of the Formosan aboriginal languages, in virtually all languages of the Philippines, in the languages of Sabah and in northern Sulawesi at least as far south as the Gorontalic group, in Malagasy, and in Chamorro. A glance at the map will show that the geographical distribution of focus languages is strikingly skewed: with a few notable exceptions, languages closer to the probable Austronesian homeland in Taiwan have preserved more of the original focus system than languages at a greater distance from it. It is an intriguing question as to why this should be the case.

If the typological boundaries in Austronesian corresponded more or less exactly to major subgroup boundaries we might feel confident in assuming that the transformation of focus languages was a product of changes in a small number of ancestral communities which were transmitted to their descendants. This may be true in some cases, but does not appear to be true in others. Thus, there is no basis for reconstructing a Philippine-type focus system for Proto Central-Eastern Malayo-Polynesian (PCEMP), the hypothetical ancestor of most of the languages of the Lesser Sunda and Moluccan islands of Indonesia, and of the Oceanic group in the Pacific. For these languages we can reasonably assume that a fairly radical restructuring of the morphosyntactic system took place in PCEMP, and that this restructured system then underwent various changes in the attested CEMP languages.

The case of Malagasy, however, is quite different. We know with some certainty that Malagasy is most closely related to the Barito languages of southeastern Kalimantan (Dahl 1951, 1977). To the extent that we have data on the verb systems of the Barito languages it appears that they lack the multiple voices/focus categories of Malagasy and are structurally more similar to such western Indonesian languages as Malay (Hardeland 1858; Sundermann 1914; Dahl 1978:383; Kawi et al. 1979-1980; Gudai 1988). Since the Malagasy evidently departed from Borneo within the past 1,300 years (Adelaar 1989; Dahl 1991) Philippine-type focus systems must have been found in Borneo south of Sabah as recently as AD 700, although apart from the borderline case of Lun Dayeh (Clayre 1991) no such systems are known today. Malagasy is thus instructive in shedding light on the relatively recent syntactic history of portions of western Indonesia. Given the close genetic relationship of the Barito languages it is improbable that Malagasy was the only Philippine-type focus language in the Barito group at the time of the migration to Madagascar. A more plausible scenario is that Malagasy was one of a number of Philippine-type focus languages which were still found in Borneo south of Sabah around AD 700, and that extensive morphosyntactic changes swept over the area after the Malagasy departed. As Dahl (1978) has noted, similar extensive changes over a period of less than two millennia are familiar from Indo-European linguistics, as with the loss of the Latin case-marking system and the rise of prepositional phrases in all of the modern Romance languages. What is different about the Malagasy case is that one language 'escaped' in time to preserve some features of the earlier system which was thoroughly transformed in those languages that remained behind.

A second puzzle concerning the distribution of focus systems is that they almost invariably are associated with verb-initial (or predicate-initial) languages. It seems reasonably certain that this was also the case in PAN, and that many attested focus languages have simply preserved the PAN word order and system of focus marking in the verb. Word-order change from VSO or VOS to SVO in much of western Indonesia, and in eastern Indonesia and the Pacific thus may have played a part in the reduction and eventual loss of focus-marking

morphology. In this connection it should be noted that the verb-initial languages of Fiji and Polynesia represent a secondary development from a Proto Oceanic stage which probably was SVO.

3 How has the PAN/PMP focus system evolved?

The preceding discussion raises the question of how the PAN/PMP focus system has evolved both in those languages that preserve some type of focus system and in those which have changed it in some fundamental way.

Wolff's reconstruction recognises four morphologically distinguished categories of 'voice': (1) active, marked by **-um-*, (2) direct passive, marked by **-en* in the non-past, and by **-in-* (as a portmanteau form) in the past, (3) local passive, marked by **-an*, and (4) instrumental passive, marked by **Si-* (Wolff writes **i-*). In some daughter languages, as Tagalog the same four morphological categories are maintained, but additional semantic roles are incorporated into the system. Tagalog *i-*, for example, marks both instrumental and benefactive, although Wolff assigns only the former semantic role to PAN **Si-*.⁵ Other languages have collapsed the four-term system of morphological marking into a three-term system. Clayre (n.d.) has suggested a typology of Bornean languages on the basis of their focus properties, with the following groups:

- (1) Philippine type. This is characterised by three or more 'focuses', verb affixation and nominal and pronominal marking. In Borneo today Type 1 is confined almost exclusively to Sabah. South of Sabah only Lun Dayeh of northern Sarawak/Kalimantan can be assigned to this category.
- (2) Reduced focus system with two 'focuses'. Languages of this type have no markers of NPs, reduced aspect marking, and SVO word order. Clayre further subdivides this into:
 - 2a Two 'focuses', two pronoun sets (Berawan, Melanau, Penan, Sebop)
 - 2b Two 'focuses', one pronoun set (Sa'ban, Lengilu')
 - 2c Two 'focuses' (Kayan)
- (3) No focus, or vestiges of focus only in subordinate clauses (many or all Kenyah dialects)

The classification of 'Type 2' as focus languages is atypical, as they are structurally much closer to western Indonesian languages such as Malay than they are to languages of the Philippines. I would suggest instead a typology which recognises the following distinctions:

- (1) Four-term languages. Alternatively, these might be called 'full focus' languages. This would include languages with at least four morphologically distinguished focuses, such as Tagalog.

⁵ Chang (1997:35ff.) notes that Kavalan marks both Instrumental and Beneficiary voices with the verbal prefix *te-*. Although *te-* does not reflect PAN **Si-*, the association of semantic roles in connection with this form is similar to that in non-Formosan languages such as Tagalog. If this pattern is inherited in both languages the mapping of five semantic roles onto four morphologically distinguished focuses in Tagalog is not an expansion of the original system. In addition, Dahl (1978) has raised the possibility that PAN may have had a fifth morphologically distinguished focus, marked by **Sa-*. Further evidence for this position appears in Blust (1999). Ross (1995:730), on the other hand, expresses doubt about whether an Instrumental voice can be posited at the PAN level.

- (2) Three-term languages. Alternatively, these might be called 'reduced focus' languages. This category would include languages such as Thao of central Taiwan, which distinguishes (a) actor focus, marked by *-um-*, (b) patient focus, marked by *-in* in the non-perfective and by *-in-* or *-in- + -in* in the perfective (Blust 1998b), and (c) locative focus, marked by *-an*; Kavalan of eastern Taiwan, which distinguishes (a) actor voice, marked by *-um-*, (b) patient voice, marked by *-an*, and (c) beneficiary/instrumental voice, marked by *te-*; or Lun Dayeh of northern Sarawak, which in the imperfective aspect distinguishes (a) actor focus, marked by *N-* (homorganic nasal substitution), (b) patient focus (or undergoer focus), marked by *-en*, and (c) instrument focus, marked by *pi-N-*. These languages have reduced the original system in two different ways: Thao by eliminating the use of affixation to mark instrumental focus in the verb, and Kavalan and Lun Dayeh by eliminating the use of affixation to mark locative focus in the verb. Until a larger sample of three-term languages is tested it is impossible to generalise about dominant patterns in the reduction of four-term languages to three-term languages.
- (3) Two-term languages with portmanteau infix *-in-*. These languages have what is essentially a two-voice system, but the passive is obligatorily perfective, a remnant of the portmanteau function of PAN **-in-* in the patient focus. Examples of several such languages in northern Sarawak are given in Blust (1997).
- (4) Two-term languages without a portmanteau infix *-in-*. Malay can be used to illustrate this type, with the proviso that it has two passives which appear to be semantically much more similar to one another than is true of the passives in a voice analysis of Philippine-type languages.

Only Types 1 and 2 should properly be called 'focus' languages, although Type 3 has properties which are difficult to account for in a synchronic description without recognising that such languages once had more complex systems of verb morphology in relation to focus-marking. It might be added that few linguists would quibble with the use of 'voice' to describe the active/passive contrasts of Types 3 and 4. To the extent that the results of such morphosyntactic reduction reflect on the nature of the original system, then, they provide some support for the view that focus is fundamentally a system of voice marking.

This typology of focus/voice possibilities in Austronesian languages raises another intriguing question. Although it has received very little attention in the literature to date, there is a remarkable correlation between word order and the presence of focus systems in Austronesian languages: almost without exception four-term and three-term languages have a verb-initial syntax. This relationship can be stated as an implication such that the presence of three or more focus possibilities implies verb-initial constituent order with almost perfect accuracy. The reverse implication fails to hold, since verb-initial syntax has developed secondarily in some Oceanic languages, such as Fijian and the Polynesian languages. The few exceptions to this correlation include moribund Formosan languages such as Thao or Saisiyat which have been subjected to very heavy contact influence from SVO Taiwanese (Minnan), and as a result have begun to favour SVO order. However, even in these languages verb-initial constructions continue to be offered as a more native-like alternative to their historically recent calqued equivalents.

To date this implication remains theoretically unexplained. Perhaps the most useful way to view it is in negative terms. Verb-initial syntax and a focus system were part of a package of PAN typological features which were retained in many of the syntactically more conservative daughter languages. The correlation in these languages is thus simply a product of shared

history. But what of those languages which have (i) changed the verb-initial constituent order, or (ii) lost the original focus system? Why do these two types of change, one affecting constituent order and the other verb morphology, appear to be so highly correlated in languages which have independently undergone either one?

For now this question remains unanswered. There are, however, some indications that the transition from a Philippine-type focus language to a language with some type of active/passive voice distinction involved changes of constituent order that affected active constructions before affecting intransitive or passive constructions. Poedjosoedarmo (this volume), citing the work of Cumming (1991), notes that 'In Classical Malay, though word order was variable, the most common word order for intransitive and passive sentences was VS. For active transitive sentences, however, the most common pattern was SVO.' In modern Malay this pattern has been levelled to SVO for all constructions. She notes that the evolution of Old Javanese to Modern Javanese involved a similar transition, with intransitive and 'passive' constructions remaining bastions of the historically older verb-initial constituent order after active constructions had passed through a word-order change.

Since it is well known that Malay and Javanese have a long and intricate history of mutual contact influence this agreement in the details of constituent order change may appear to have no bearing on broader theoretical questions. But a strikingly parallel development can be seen in comparing Lun Dayeh and Bario Kelabit of northern Sarawak. Lun Dayeh and Kelabit are either divergent dialects of a single language or very closely related languages. Clayre (1991) has shown that Lun Dayeh is a Type 2 language in terms of the typology sketched above — that is, a language with a reduced focus system. At the same time it retains a verb-initial constituent order in intransitive constructions, and in both actor focus and goal focus transitive constructions: *l-em-anguy ieh neh* (swim-AF 3SG particle) 'He is swimming', *m-eru' bigan ieh ina* (AF-wash dish 3SG just-now) '(S)he was washing dishes just now', *k-in-an ku bua' di' peh* (eat-PF-Perf. 1SG fruit particle already) 'I have already eaten the fruit'. In contrast with Lun Dayeh, Bario Kelabit is a Type 3 language, with only an active/passive voice contrast. Most strikingly, although Bario still permits verb-initial constituent order in both intransitive and passive constructions, unlike Lun Dayeh it requires all active constructions to be verb-medial: *m-udur ieh* (AF-stand 3SG) 'He is standing', *itep uku' ineh uih* (bite-PF-Perf. dog that 1SG) 'That dog bit me', *nih uku' sinih ng-etep uih* (this dog here ACT-bite 1SG) 'this dog is biting me'. A similar situation is found in Bintulu, a Type 3 language of coastal northern Sarawak, except that intransitive constructions appear to have already followed active transitive constructions in the change from VS to SV order, leaving only the passive with preferred, but optional verb-initial constituent order: *isa lupek bajew ineh* (3SG fold-ACT shirt that) 'He is folding that shirt', *lipek ña bajew ineh* (fold-PASS 3SG shirt that) 'He folded that shirt' (but *akew de-bukut ña* (1SG PASS-punch 3SG) 'He punched me'), *isa me-lakaw* (3SG ACT-walk) 'He is walking', *isa taba taba lalu* (3SG smile intensive) 'She is always smiling'.

Although closely related to one another, Lun Dayeh and Kelabit have not shared a common ancestor with Malay or Javanese within approximately the past 3,500 years. They are, moreover, languages of interior Borneo, which until the second half of the twentieth century had very little contact with Malay. Similarly, although Kelabit–Lun Dayeh and Bintulu both belong to the North Sarawak group of languages (Blust 1974) they are members of different primary branches within it, and are geographically widely separated. These shared details of constituent order change in Kelabit–Lun Dayeh, Bintulu, Malay and Javanese thus must be regarded as historically independent. To the extent that such

parallelism cannot plausibly be attributed to limited possibilities it suggests a linguistic motivation for the historically repeated sequence of changes:

1. loss of focus system;
2. VS order changes to SV order in active constructions;
3. VS order changes to SV order in intransitive and passive constructions.

The Bintulu data further suggest that the transition from VS to SV order may occur earlier in intransitive constructions than in passives, but until independent evidence can be found to confirm these preliminary indications this more detailed ordering must be considered provisional.

With regard to the transition from VSO to SVO in active transitive sentences Poedjosoedarmo (this volume) has suggested that 'It was the necessity of showing a close link between the verb and two noun phrases associated with it which initially prompted the word order change.' On the other hand, 'In Javanese, the adoption of the new order for passive sentences was probably related to loss of obligatory marking of the agent and associated with the option of having a non-agent (such as patient of a passive benefactive verb) follow the verb.' Poedjosoedarmo does not explain what she means by 'a close link' in this quotation. Since she cites 'the non-ubiquitousness of noun phrase marking' as one of the two most significant changes from a presumed Philippine-type ancestor to Old Javanese, what she appears to have in mind is that the change from VS to SV in active constructions was motivated by the loss of earlier prenominal particles which marked semantic role. But it is not at all clear why the loss of noun phrase markers would trigger a change in constituent order. In full focus languages with noun phrase markers such as Tagalog the nominal arguments enjoy a relatively free order in relation to one another, but always follow the verb. If the noun phrase markers were to disappear, as they have, for example, in Malagasy, fixed word order simply usurps their function, leaving the position of the verb intact. Moreover, no reason is given as to why the need to show a close link between the verb and its nominal arguments would be greater in active than in passive constructions, which is the most crucial observation in need of explanation. Although I am not proposing it as an alternative explanation, one could as easily argue that constituent order change in active constructions preceded the similar change in non-active constructions because active constructions had lower text frequency and were thus in a sense more marginal to the system than intransitive or passive constructions. In short, the reason that active constructions have undergone the change from VS to SV constituent order before intransitive and passive constructions in several genetically and geographically separated languages remains to be fully explained.

There are also problems in trying to generalise Poedjosoedarmo's explanation for the change from VS to SV order in passive sentences. Although 'the loss of obligatory marking of the agent' may have played a part in motivating this change in Javanese, we must keep in mind that similar changes have occurred more widely in western Indonesia. In Sa'ban, a phonologically and morphologically divergent dialect of Kelabit-Lun Dayeh, all traces of a Philippine-type focus system have been lost, transitive and intransitive constructions show SV order, and agents of passives appear to be obligatorily marked. There can hardly be any doubt that in reaching this state Sa'ban passed through an earlier stage similar to that of Bario Kelabit. The change of VS to SV constituent order in the earlier passive thus took place even though the conditions cannot have been the same as those in Javanese.

Finally, Van den Berg (1996) and Mead (this volume) have traced various features of the evolution of focus in the languages of Sulawesi, and Starosta, Pawley and Reid (1982) attempted to provide an overarching framework which unites the focus systems of

Philippine-type languages with the superficially very different verb systems of Oceanic languages. Virtually all of the languages of Borneo south of Sabah have the following morpheme-structure constraints: (1) vowels in prepenultimate syllables have merged as schwa (this began with *a, and later was extended to include *i and *u), (2) prepenultimate schwa is disallowed in initial position. Since the changes which produced these constraints would have eliminated the inherited reflex of *i-, it is possible that they initiated the reduction of focus systems in this area. In Sulawesi the mechanisms appear to have been very different, based on a change in the balance of forces within the verb system itself rather than introduced from without by phonological innovations with grammatically destructive potential. Much research remains to be done in understanding the interplay of forces that led to the simplification of focus systems in various parts of the Austronesian world and their preservation in others. This volume and others like it will undoubtedly contribute toward that goal.

Appendix I: Terms for the grammatical category of 'focus' in the Austronesian literature

No.	Language	Term	Source
1	Sangir	voice	Adriani (1893)
2	Tagalog	case	Blake (1906)
3	Malagasy	voice	Malzac (1908)
4	Tagalog	voice	Bloomfield (1917)
5	Tagalog	theme	Blake (1925)
6	Tagalog	case	Blake (1930)
7	Ilokano	voice	Bloomfield (1942)
8	Ilokano	voice	Vanoverbergh (1955)
9	Maranao	voice	McKaughan (1958)
10	Yogad	focus	Healey (1958)
11	Agta	focus	Healey (1960)
12	Atayal	voice	Egerod (1965)
13	Cotabato Manobo	case	Kerr (1965)
14	Ivatan	focus	Reid (1966)
15	Bikol	verb class	Mintz (1971)
16	Maranao	case/topicalisation	McKaughan (1970)
17	Kapampangan	case	Gonzalez (1971)
18	Timugon Murut	focus	Prentice (1971)
19	Tagalog	focus	Ramos (1971)
20	Tagalog	focus	Schachter and Otones (1972)
21	Chamorro	focus	Topping (1973)
22	Atayal	voice	Wolff (1973)
23	PAn	voice	Wolff (1973)
24	Tagalog	case	Ramos (1974)
25	Tondano	voice	Sneddon (1975)
26	Malagasy	voice	Keenan (1976)

27	Tagalog	focus	Llamzon (1976)
28	Tagalog	focus	McFarland (1976)
29	Tagalog	topicalisation	Schachter (1976)
30	Tsou	focus	Tsuchida (1976)
31	Bunun	case	Jeng (1977)
32	Tagalog	focus	Naylor (1980)
33	Timugon Murut	voice	Prentice (1980)
34	Amis	focus	Chen (1982)
35	Tagalog	voice	Foley and Van Valin (1984)
36	Malagasy	focus	Dahl (1986)
37	Tagalog	voice	De Guzman (1986)
38	Tagalog	recentralisation	Starosta (1986)
39	Malagasy	voice	Randriamasimanana (1986)
40	Tagalog	focus	Himmelman (1987)
41	Kadazan	focus	Hurlbut (1988)
42	Kimaragang Dusun	focus	Kroeger (1988)
43	Tagalog	voice	Shibatani (1988)
44	Ilokano	voice	Clausen (1990)
45	Tagalog	trigger	Schachter (1990)
46	Lun Dayeh	focus	Clayre (1991)
47	Saisiyat	focus	Yeh (1991)
48	Atayal	voice	Rau (1992)
49	Tsou	focus	Zeitoun (1992)
50	Atayal	voice	Huang (1993)
51	Tagalog	voice	Kroeger (1993)
52	Mori	case	Barsel (1994)
53	Tsou	focus	Szakos (1994)
54	Amis	focus	Wu (1995)
55	PAN	voice	Ross (1995)
56	Tagalog	topicalisation	Richards (1996)
57	Tagalog	voice	Voskuil (1996)
58	Amis	voice	Liu (1997)
59	Kavalan	voice	Chang (1997)
60	Kavalan	focus	Lee (1997)
61	Puyuma	focus	Tan (1997)
62	Seediq	voice	Chang (1997)
63	Tukang Besi	voice	Donohue (this volume)
64	Ratahan, Lauje	voice	Himmelman (this volume)
65	Seediq	focus	Holmer (this volume)
66	Proto-Kaili-Pamona	focus	Mead (this volume)
67	Sasak	voice	Wouk (this volume)

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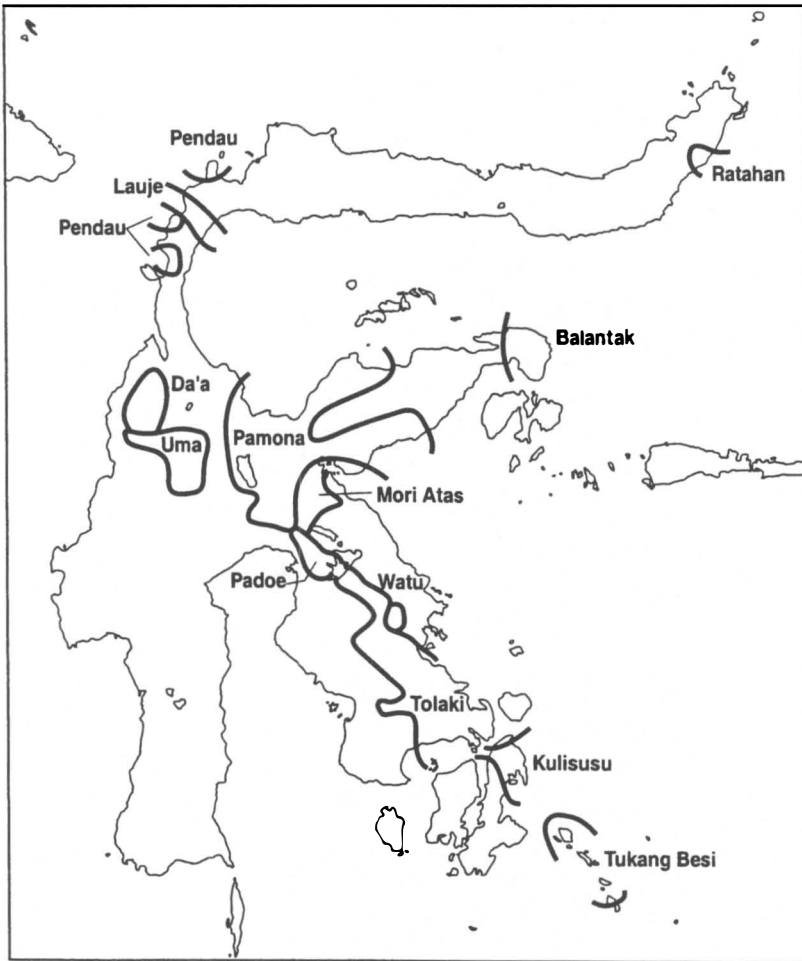
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— PART II —

Languages of Sulawesi



Map 2: Languages discussed in Part II