Between topics and subjects: an A/A' typology of Austronesian pivots

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1. Introduction

This paper presents a comparative-syntactic investigation of Austronesian pivots, focusing on microvariation in their subjecthood status and syntactic A/A' properties. Along the lines of Patrianto & Chen 2023, we argue that pivots form a continuum from topic-like A'-elements to subject-like A-elements, instead of a uniform syntactic phenomenon. This is reflected by i) the choice of controllee in obligatory control configurations, ii) definiteness/specificity requirements on pivots, iii) the pivot's A- vs. A'-properties, and iv) licensing restrictions on the non-pivot agent. Systematic correlations between properties i-iv) indicate that pivots obtain different syntactic functions, ranging from topics in languages like Tagalog to subjects in languages like Indonesian and Acehnese, with pivots in languages like Balinese and Malagasy standing between topics and subjects. We propose that the variation stems from an ongoing topic to subject grammaticalization process, with single languages being located at different stages thereof.

2. Background

Austronesian languages have been renowned for their complex *voice* system, where one (any) core argument is rendered the salient *pivot* of the clause. It is promoted to a prominent structural and discourse status, by occupying a higher position, cross-referenced in the verb and exclusively privileged for A'-extraction. While the pivot DP may be designated via a dedicated marker or its fixed position, its thematic identity and/or base-position co-varies with a change in verbal affixal morphology, making a two- or four-way voice marking distinction. Verbal voice morphology distinguishes between AV (actor voice), TV (theme voice), LV (locative voice) and CV (circumstantial voice) in Philippine-type four-tiered systems, and between AV and OV (object voice) in Indonesian-type two-tiered systems.[1] The following examples from Tagalog (Philippine-type) illustrate how a transitive clause with an additional benefactive and locative applicative may be expressed in four different ways, depending on the choice of pivot.[2]

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[1] Abbreviations used in this paper: AV (actor/agent voice), CV (circumstantial voice), DAT(ive), DEF(inite), DEM(onstrative), FAM(iliar), GEN(itive), LNK (linker), LV (lovative voice), OBL(ique), OV (object voice), P(reposition), PERF(ect tense), PFV (perfective), PIV(ot), POSS(essive), PST (past tense), TV (theme voice).

[2] There is broad consensus that Austronesian *voice* cannot be reduced to an Indo-European-style system of active-passive voice. For instance, non-AV is not morphologically more marked than AV; non-pivot agents are not demoted obliques, but retain their core argument status; frequency of use is often higher for OV; Indonesian-type languages possess a separate dedicated passive construction (see Shibatani 1988, Chen & McDonnell 2019).

(1) *Tagalog*   [Rackowski & Richards 2005: 566]

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

    b. B**\<in\>**ili   ng bata **ang tela** sa palengke para sa nanay
        \<TV.PFV.\>buy GEN child **PIV cloth** DAT market P   DAT mother
        'The child bought the cloth at the market for mother.'

    c. B\<in\>ilh-**an** ng bata ng tela **ang palengke** para sa nanay
        \<PFV\>buy-LV GEN child GEN cloth **PIV market** P   DAT mother
        'The child bought cloth at the market for mother.'

    d. **I**-b\<in\>ili   ng bata ng tela sa palengke **ang nanay**
        CV-\<PFV\>buy GEN child GEN cloth DAT market   **PIV mother**
        'The child bought cloth at the market for the mother.'

The status of the pivot has been debated as to whether it is a true subject in an A-position, reflecting an alternation in grammatical roles, or a(n aboutness topic) in an A'-position, reflecting merely an alternation in information structure. In fact, Guilfoyle et al. 1992 claim that Austronesian languages regularly possess two positions for subjects, a thematic one in the argument domain, and a derived one in the inflectional domain. The distinctive characteristic of Austronesian is that these two positions can be filled by distinct elements, so that, when the pivot is any argument other than the agent, the clause essentially contains two subjects. Building on Schachter 1976, they argue that the uniform notion of subject breaks down in Austronesian, as typical subjecthood properties are distributed over two different arguments.

Austronesian pivots have received a range of syntactic analyses, depending on whether a change in argument structure and/or predicate valency is assumed, as well as what voice marking reflects. The first group roughly parallels pivot movement to object shift: in the presence of an [EPP] probe on $v°$ for non-AV structures, the highest internal argument is attracted to an outer SpecvP. The highest derived argument within vP undergoes Agree with a higher functional head, and voice marking spells-out the case independently assigned to that DP. Nonetheless, pivothood is dissociated from subjecthood, as it is still the external argument that remains the subject (Rackowski & Richards 2005, Cole et al. 2008).

The second group treats Austronesian languages as ergative and is divided into two subgroups. Both attribute voice marking to different flavors of $v°$ based on their case-assigning capacity, and identify pivots as the element receiving ABS case. The first subgroup views OV/TV as the basic ergative transitive structure, with the external argument receiving ERG. AV is treated as an antipassive, with the internal argument demoted to an oblique, and the remaining voice markers as applicative structures (De Guzman 1976, Payne 1982, Gerdts 1988, Aldridge 2004, 2008). The other subgroup adopts a split-ergative approach, whereby AV corresponds to an accusative system and all other voice markers correspond to ergative alignment (Paul & Travis 2006, Aldridge 2016, Kaufman 2017, Brodkin 2022, Patrianto & Chen 2023).

The third group dissociates pivothood from both case and subjecthood, arguing that voice marking occurs at CP and is conditioned by information structure. The pivot is treated as the (independently case-licensed) discourse-prominent element that is attracted to the left-periphery, and voice morphology is the spell-out of Agree with the high movement-inducing probe (Richards 2000, Rackowski 2002, Hyams et al. 2006, V. Chen 2017). The fourth group posits voice marking as the reflex of any sort of argument extraction, akin to *wh*-agreement, its morphological form encoding the launching site. Such accounts vary, from high base-generation and null-operator A'-movement, as in Pearson 2005, to movement to a case-assigning mixed A/A'-position in CP, as in Erlewine et al. 2017.

We eventually show that all these analyses manage to describe some subset of pivots; however, pivothood might simply not be a uniform phenomenon. Few approaches consider the broader typological perspective (cf. Patrianto & Chen 2023), which is necessary to demonstrate the variation across the syntactic function of pivots, and so the insufficiency of a single analysis. The conclusion of our work is that Austronesian pivots range in a continuum from topics to subjects, with intermediate stages in-between, which explains both the number of existing syntactic accounts, and the often mixed profile of pivots.

3. Pivots & obligatory control

Control is a widely accepted diagnostic for the functional subjecthood status of arguments (Keenan 1976, Dixon 1994): the controllee (PRO) in an obligatory control construction invariably corresponds to the subject of the embedded clause. Thus, if a pivot corresponds to the subject, we expect it to act as controllee. If a pivot is not a subject but a topic, we predict that control targets the external argument, irrespective of which element is promoted to pivot. Interestingly, Austronesian languages fall into two classes with respect to control: some control the pivot, irrespective of its θ-role and some control the external argument, irrespective of voice marking. This is surprising under the assumption that pivots depict the same subjecthood status across languages. Before proceeding, we explicate how to determine control in Austronesian languages, in order to exclude similarly looking but syntactically different configurations.

3.1. Control in Austronesian

Austronesian languages exhibit a set of configurations that resemble obligatory control on the surface but depict different syntactic phenomena. Among such are *backwards control*, *crossed control* and *restructuring complement clauses*. Malagasy, for example, exhibits *backward control*, where the controllee (PRO) occurs in the matrix clause whereas the controller surfaces in the embedded clause (see Potsdam 2009 for analysis and data). Backward control is only permitted under a matrix CV verb, as soon as embedded under an AV verb, Malagasy exhibits "regular" forward control. Thus, we only include examples where the matrix verb occurs in AV form. A matrix AV verb simultaneously excludes instances of another atypical instance of Ausronesian control: *crossed control*. In crossed control configurations, the embedded agent may be interpreted as matrix agent, rendering two possible readings of in (2): *you want to hug the child*, alternating freely with the expected reading *the child wants you to hug it*.

(2)   Anak mau [**kamu ø**-peluk]
      child want [**2SG   ov**-hug]
      Crossed control reading: 'You want to hug the child.'
      Standard control reading: 'The child wants you to hug it'   *Indonesian* [Berger 2019: 62]

Crossed control is only permitted under default/OV matrix verbs, usually occurs with *want* verbs, and becomes ungrammatical under matrix AV marking (Berger 2019; Bryant et al. 2023). Last, many Ausronesian languages exhibit *restructuring* constructions where the complement clause is a reduced vP (Wurmbrand & Shimamura 2017). Restructuring clauses are licensed by matrix verbs like *try, finish, begin, stop* and exhibit a reduced/ predetermined voice value; the embedded voice is either default AV or matches the matrix voice (AV + AV; TV + TV). They further show typical restructuring properties, such as the disallowance of embedded tense, aspect or negation and permission for scrambling and long object movement (T. Chen 2010, Paul et al. 2021). In order to exclude backward and crossed control as well as instances of restructuring, we focus on examples expressing matrix AV and embedded OV/TV morphology. This combination cannot be an instance of voice restructuring, as the embedded verb can feature neither default nor matching voice. It can also not be an instance of crossed control, since this interpretation disappears in the presence of overt AV marking on the matrix verb. Finally, it would not allow backward control, as these cases are only found with matrix CV. Further, we selected common control verbs such as *decide*, *promise* and *hesitate*, only included examples that have previously been described as obligatory control, and checked for the possibility of embedded mood, negation and FUT marking, aiming for *Situation* class complements in the sense of Wurmbrand & Lohninger 2023.

After having excluded instances that might not correspond to standard obligatory control, we find three different control patterns in Austronesian: i) such where the embedded agent is controlled, irrespective of voice marking, ii) such where the embedded pivot is controlled, irrespective of its thematic role and iii) such where we cannot test control since embedded clauses do not allow OV marking, require to be full finite clauses expressing an embedded pronoun, or solely permit intransitive complement clauses.

(3)   a.   **Controllee = agent:** *Madurese, Tagalog, Cebuano (?)*
      b.   **Controllee = pivot:** *Acehnese, Balinese, Indonesian, Malagasy*
      c.   **Controllee = not testable:** *Javanese, Kavalan, Paiwan, Puyuma, Tsou, Seediq Atayal*

3.2. Agent versus pivot control

In Tagalog, Madurese and Cebuano the embedded controllee corresponds to the external argument, irrespective of which argument is promoted to pivot. Taking control as an indication of subjecthood, this suggests that in these languages, pivots do not obtain the structural status of subjects.

(4)   *Tagalog*   [a) Guilfoyle et al. 1992: 390; b) Kroeger 1993: 94]

    a. Nagatubili   siya=ng [PRO hiramin **ang pera**   ]
        PFV.AV.hesitated he=C   [PRO TV-borrow **PIV money**]
        'He hesitated to borrow the money.'   PRO = agent; *money* = pivot

    b. *Nagatubili   si Maria=ng [bigy-an **PRO** ng pera   ni   Ben]
        PFV.AV.hesitate PIV Maria=C [give-TV **PRO** GEN money GEN Ben]
        Int.: 'Maria hesitated to be given money by Ben.'   *PRO = pivot; *Ben* = agent

In the second type of languages (Acehnese, Balinese, Indonesian and Malagasy), the controllee corresponds to the pivot, irrespective of thematic role, suggesting that the pivot obtains (at least some) subject properties.

(5)   *Balinese*   [own elicitation]

    a. Ia majanji   [**PRO** periksa   dokter]
        3SG AV.promised [**PRO** ov.examine doctor]
        'She promised to be examined by a doctor.'   PRO = pivot; *doctor* = agent

    b. *Ia majanji   [**dokter** periksa   PRO]
        3SG AV.promised [**doctor** ov.examine PRO]
        Int.: 'She promised to examine a doctor.'   *PRO = agent; *doctor* = pivot

The division of languages with respect to control is a first indication that pivothood does not constitute a uniform syntactic phenomenon, but expresses different degrees of subjecthood. In the next section we test this prediction and argue that the variance in control correlates with the overall A'- and A-status of pivots, eventually reaching the conclusion that the syntactic status of pivots ranges from A'-topics to A-subjects.

4. An A/A' typology of pivots

The question of whether pivots instantiate a syntactically uniform phenomenon hinges on the fine-grained distribution of their A/A'-properties. Empirically, the relevant literature reveals the variation in the A- or A'-profile of pivots across languages. Theoretically, the issue is whether this distribution is random, or can be systematically predicted. The facts about obligatory control point towards the latter direction, on the premise that the choice of controllee directly correlates with the A'/topic- or A/subject-status of the pivot. This prediction is borne out: strikingly, languages that consistently control the embedded agent feature pivots with predominantly A'-properties, implicating their status as an A'-topic. In contrast, languages that consistently control the pivot feature pivots with predominantly or exclusively A-properties, implicating their status as a surface subject. The data is summarized in Table 1.

	LANGUAGE	Controllee	Def-initeness	Condition A/C reconstruction	WCO	Non-pivot agent
A'-topic	**Ceb./Mad./Tag.**	agent	✓	✓	×	free
A/A'	**Balinese**	pivot	✓	A ×, C ✓	×	R-adjacent
A/A'	**Malagasy**	pivot	✓	×	×	R-adjacent
A-subject	**Ace./Ind.**	pivot	×	×	×	L-adjacent

Table 1: Austronesian pivots ranging from topics to subjects

We focus on the Malayo-Polynesian branch of the Austronesian family, which consists of Philippine-type (Cebuano, Malagasy, Tagalog) and Indonesian-type (Acehnese, Balinese, Indonesian, Madurese) languages, with a four- and a two-way voice marking distinction, respectively.

4.1. Definiteness and specificity

Although the alleged requirement for a (formally and semantically) definite and/or specific interpretation of pivots has been extensively studied, it is not a universal property of them. Languages at the top and middle of the table are indeed subject to it (6). Thus, an A'-component, typically associated with such information-structural effects, must be (at least partially) present in the pivot site, rendering it in some sense topical. On the contrary, pivots at the bottom of the table exhibit no such discourse restrictions (7).

(6) **Baji'*(-na)** nanges
    baby*(-DEF) AV.cry
    'The/*a baby cries.'
    Madurese [Davies 2010: 177]

(7) **Se-buah rumah** sudah aku jual   kemarin
    one-CLF house PERF 1SG ov.sell yesterday
    'I have sold a house yesterday.'
    Indonesian [Patrianto & Chen 2023: 11]

4.2. Condition C connectivity

In languages at the top of the table, promotion to pivot reconstructs for Condition C, a typical property of (non-adjunct) A'-movement (8). Languages at the middle and bottom of the table differ in that promotion to pivot bleeds Condition C connectivity and fixes underlying violations, as per A-movement, depicted in (9) (of which the AV counterpart is ungrammatical).

(8) M<in>amahal [ng nanay ni Juan$_i$] **[ang anak ng pating na iyan]$_i$**
    <TV>loves   [GEN mother GEN Juan$_i$] **[PIV child GEN shark LI that]$_i$**
    'The bastard$_i$, Juan$_i$'s mother loves.'   *Tagalog* [Richards 2013: 419]

(9) Notambazany$_i$ ariary folo **ny zana-dRakoto$_i$**
    PST.TV.hire.GEN.3 ariary ten **DET child.GEN.Rakoto**
    'Rakoto$_i$'s child, he$_i$ hired for 10 ariary.'   *Malagasy* [Paul 2002: 112]

4.3. Condition A & new antecedents for anaphor binding

A trickier question is whether anaphor pivots reconstruct and whether pivots may create antecedents for subject-oriented agent anaphors. In general, theme anaphor pivots at the top of the table reconstruct to be bound by the agent, (10), whereas movement of an anaphor pivot at the middle and bottom of the table results in ungrammaticality, (11). Still, anaphor binding may be murky to test because in (ungrammatical) examples with a reflexive theme pivot, it is not always discernible whether Condition A or C is violated, or both, though ungrammaticality *per se* speaks in favor of a (at least partial) A-position of the pivot.

(10) Tan'awon ni Rosa **ang iyang ka'ugalingon** sa salamin
    TV.look.at GEN Rosa **PIV her.LNK self**   OBL mirror
    'Herself, Rosa will look at in the mirror.'   *Cebuano* [Bell 1976: 35]

(11) ***Awakne** gugut cicing
    self   ov-bite dog
    Int.: 'Itself, the dog bit.'   *Balinese* [Wechsler & Arka 1998: 406]

Creation of new anaphor antecedents is similarly difficult to test, as non-pivot reflexive agents may be independently banned (McGinnis 2004). At least Acehnese allows reflexive agents, and (optional) pivot movement under OV licenses anaphor binding, indicating its A-profile, (12).

(12) **Mie aneuk-aneuk miet$_i$ nyan** awaknyan$_{i/k}$ poh
    cat child-child   small DEM 3PL   ov.hit
    'The children$_i$'s cat was hit by them(selves)$_i$.'   *Acehnese* [Legate 2014: 49]

A safer test in languages prohibiting bare agent anaphors is to embed the reflexive within a complex agent DP, which would be ruled out under AV due to Condition A. One such language is Tagalog, where the pivot apparently reconstructs for anaphor binding. Failing to remedy the underlying violation, Tagalog must differ from Acehnese either in the type of movement or in the grammatical status of the pivot.

(13) *Binatikos   [ng   mga artikulo tungkol sa kanyang sarili$_i$] **sa Pangulo**$_i$
      TV.criticized [GEN PL   article about   P him/her self   ] **PIV president**
      Int.: 'The president$_i$, the articles about herself$_i$ criticized.'   *Tagalog* [Richards 2013: 415]

4.4. Weak Crossover (WCO)

Promotion to pivot feeds variable binding by obviating WCO (a hallmark property of A-movement) in all languages under investigation. Surpisingly, new binding possibilities are created by promotion to pivot even in languages in languages like Tagalog, where pivots otherwise resemble more A'-topics.

(14) **Tieptiep aneuk**$_i$ mak   droe-jih$_i$ lindong
      every   child   mother self-3FAM ov.protect
      'Every child$_i$, his/her$_i$ mother protects.'   *Acehnese* [Legate 2014: 14]

(15) m<in>amahal ng   kangyang$_i$ ama **ang baway anak**$_i$
      TV.PRF>love GEN 3SG.POSS father PIV **every child**
      'Every child$_i$, his/her$_i$ father loves.'   *Tagalog* [Rackowski 2002: 42]

4.5. Adjacency of non-pivot agents

A final property concerns how different languages treat their non-pivot agent. Its clausal position in languages at the top of the table is more or less flexible, modulo pragmatic factors on word order preferences, see *Juan* in (16). Languages at the middle and bottom of the table, however, require strict left- or right-adjacency of the non-pivot agent to the verbal complex, with nothing else intervening, see *lemur* in (17). We will elaborate on why this property correlates with the pivot's A'- or A-status in Section 5.

(16) **Gi-hatag-an** (ni Juan) **ang bata** (ni Juan)   sa   libro (ni Juan)
      LV-give-LV   (GEN Juan) **PIV child** (GEN Juan) OBL book (GEN Juan)
      'Juan wrote the letter.'   *Cebuano* [Shibatani 1988:89]

(17) **Nohanin'** (*haingana) ny gidro haingana **ny   voankazo** omaly
      PST.TV.eat (*quickly) DET lemur quickly DET **fruit**   yesterday
      'The lemur ate the fruit quickly yesterday.'   *Malagasy* [Pearson 2005: 392]

5. Pivots on a cline from topic- to subjecthood

The distinctions in control, definiteness/specificity requirements and A/A' properties as well as the correlation between these properties (depicted in Table 1) strongly suggests that pivots across Austronesian do not depict a uniform syntactic phenomenon. Following Patrianto & Chen 2023, we propose that pivots are arranged on a scale from A'-topics to A-subjects. In the languages high on the table (Cebuano, Madurese, Tagalog), pivots are topic-like elements, best captured by A'-analyses such as Richards 2000, Rackowski 2002, Hyams et al. 2006, Pearson 2005, V. Chen 2017 and alike. In languages at the bottom of the table (Acehnese, Indonesian), pivots resemble proper A-subjects, best analysed by double subject or possibly split ergative approaches such as Arka 2003; Guilfoyle et al. 1992; Paul 2000; Paul & Travis 2006; Legate 2014; Aldridge 2016 and alike. Pivots in the middle of the table (Balinese, Malagasy) exhibit a mixture of subjecthood and topichood properties, best accounted for with an A/A' syntax such as proposed in Erlewine et al. 2017 or Patrianto & Chen 2023, where pivots either land in a case-associated position in the left periphery or undergo obligatory topicalization after having been promoted to subject.

We propose that the A-to-A' cline stems from an ongoing topic to subject grammaticalization process, a diachronic phenomenon observed in numerous languages outside of Austronesian (see Van Gelderen 2022 and references therein). Adjacency of non-pivot agents (under voices other than AV, depicted in Section 4.5) further corroborates this process: as topic-to-subject grammaticalization often goes hand in hand with passive formation (Polinsky 2016), we propose that OV/TV (in the languages in the middle and bottom of the table), structurally and functionally resembles a type of non-canonical passive (see also Legate 2014). The theme pivot is interpreted as subject, as it A-moves and receives unmarked case above the agent. However, the verb still remains syntactically transitive, the external argument is not demoted to an

oblique, and the relevant morphology is not more marked than the AV counterpart. Since unmarked case is now reserved for the pivot, and assuming that *v*/Voice loses its lexical case-assigning capacity, the external argument can only be licensed via strict adjacency to the verb, a commonly assumed post-syntactic mechanism for nominal licensing (Levin 2014; Branan 2022). Such structures might be subsequently reinterpreted as transitive ergative configurations, eventually rendering a split ergative system in which AV instantiates accusative alignment and OV/TV ergative alignment. Strict verbal adjacency might then be viewed as an intermediate stage in the emergence of an ergative system, whereby the external argument is in some sense "inherently" licensed by *v*/Voice, only that this manifests by positional means.

Support for this hypothesis comes from the fact that the adjacency requirement emerges in languages at the middle/bottom of the table, which share the following characteristics: (i) a more impoverished voice system; (ii) A/subject-properties of the pivot; (iii) frequent analyses as split-ergative systems (Paul & Travis 2006, Aldridge 2016, Kaufman 2017); (iv) a morpho-syntactic collapse of OV/TV and passive configurations (Arka & Manning 1998, Legate 2014, Aldridge 2008, Arka 2008, Cole et al. 2008, Kroeger 2014, Riesberg 2014). The latter can be observed in Balinese; there, the same suffix *-a* is interpreted either as 3rd person agreement, if there is no overt agent DP, see (18), or as a passive marker in the presence of an overt agent, (19). In the passive-like interpretation, the agent is typically (but not necessarily) encoded as a *by*-phrase, with implications for its core-argument status (Arka & Manning 1998, Kroeger 2014). Similar facts obtain in Indonesian (Patrianto & Chen 2023) and Acehnese (Legate 2014), which have developed a separate marked passive construction, often treated as akin to (morphologically null) OV.[3]

(18) Nyoman baang=**a**   pipis
Nyoman **ov**.give=**3sg** money
'Nyoman, (s)he gave money to.'
Balinese OV [Arka 2008: 70]

(19) Nyoman baang-**a** pipis **teken Wayan**
Nyoman give-**pass** money **by   Wayan**
'Nyoman was given money (by Wayan).'
Balinese PASS [Arka 2008: 70]

6. Theoretical extensions and conclusion

Though a detailed syntactic account is reserved for future work, we will briefly lay out some assumptions. In particular, we maintain that pivots are derived via (overt or covert) movement in the left periphery, via an intermediate step at the edge of *v*/Voice, where voice marking is determined (Aldridge 2008). Adopting a featural view of the A/A'-distinction, as per van Urk 2015, we suggest that the mixed behavior of pivots might stem from an interplay of composite A/A'-probes and case-licensing. We assume that WCO effects track the A/A'-distinction in the technical sense (Ruys 2004, Sauerland 2004), whereas Condition C tracks the locus of (abstract) case assignment (Takahashi & Hulsey 2009).

In languages at the top and middle of the table, pivots are attracted by a composite A/A' probe at the left periphery, whence the mixed A/A'-properties. Languages at the bottom of the table involve a plain A-probe in the inflectional domain, whence the pivot's pure A-properties. In addition, the pivot site in languages at the top of the table is dissociated from case assignment (i.e., all nominal licensing occurs within the argument domain), whence the reconstruction for Condition C. Languages at the middle and bottom of the table contain a case-assigning pivot position, whence the possible obviation of Condition C.[4] The implication of this interplay is that pivots at the top of the table land in a partial A'-position that does not case-license them, thus are topics but not surface subjects; pivots at the bottom of the table land in a case-assigning, purely A-position, and become surface subjects; languages at the middle of the table land in a mixed position that also feeds case, and thereby are both (or in-between) topics and subjects.

The common denominator of Malayo-Polynesian languages is that promotion to pivot involves A-movement, whether to a mixed or a pure A-position. The reason is, we assume, that promotion to pivot is restricted to core argument DPs, excluding PPs and adjuncts. Its licensing function is not necessarily

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[3] Support for this reanalysis comes again from diachrony, as there is a cross-linguistic grammaticalization process from 3rd person pronouns/clitics to passive markers (see Heine & Kuteva 2003).

[4] Our own elicitation data show that in Balinese, pivot movement obligatorily reconstructs for Condition C. Instead of contradicting our assumption that its pivot site feeds case, and should therefore bleed Condition C, preliminary evidence suggests that, in contrast to Malagasy, accusative is still available to the theme under OV, and so the pivot receives case twice. We postulate that, in such instances of case-stacking, case positions cannot be skipped. Condition C thus tracks the locus of first case-assignment and a lower copy of the R-expression is obligatorily interpreted.

related to case, but to the obligatory nature of an (originally) topicalization construction, as obligatory as the derivation of a (surface) subject. This process is so tightly integrated into the clause that it ultimately leads to the grammaticalization path, rendering these systems discourse-configurational (Miyagawa 2010). We may now understand why pivot movement in Tagalog feeds only variable but not anaphor binding. Suppose a bound variable merely requires an operator in a c-commanding A-position, irrespective of its grammatical role, whereas (certain) anaphors are subject-oriented in the classical sense. It then follows that promotion to pivot of an internal argument fixes WCO, as it involves A-movement; still, the pivot fails to serve as antecedent for a reflexive within the in-situ agent, as it does not acquire a novel subject status.

To conclude, we presented a comparative investigation of Austronesian pivots, focusing on microvariation in i) control constructions, ii) definiteness/specificity requirements, iii) A/A' properties and iv) licensing of the non-pivot agent. As the language-specific values of (i-iv) are correlated, pivots do not depict a uniform syntactic phenomenon, but rather stand on a continuum from A'-topics to A-subjects. We suggest that this continuum stems from an ongoing topic-to-subject grammaticalization, accompanied by the formation of non-canonical passives. The diverse A/A' status of pivots might stem from an interplay of composite probing, A-movement and case assignment, indicating that these processes do not necessarily go hand in hand. Single Austronesian languages represent different stages of this cline, thereby teaching us on the notion of subjecthood and the interaction between information structure and grammatical roles.

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