

The Typology of Voice in Malayic: The development of agent-demoting passives

A key typological characteristic of traditional Austronesian languages such as Seediq, Malagasy, Tagalog etc. is that these languages display a so-called 'Philippine' type voice system. While in languages with a European-type voice system, the agent in passive constructions is 'demoted' from (core) argument to adjunct (as evidenced by syntactic behavior, e.g. optionality of agent, binding and extraction patterns typical of adjuncts rather than arguments etc.), in languages with a 'Philippine' type voice system, agent arguments are retained as core arguments in transitive constructions with non-agent subjects.

A large proportion of the Austronesian family has completely lost the 'Philippine' type voice system, but Indonesian-type languages have been claimed to exhibit a 'mixed' voice system. The term 'mixed' refers to the fact that, on the one hand, these languages retain a 'Philippine' type voice construction (often termed 'object voice'), while on the other hand, they also appear to exhibit a European-type passive in which the agent argument is 'demoted' to adjunct. This passive construction is marked with the prefix *di-* in Standard Indonesian.

Although the etymological origin of the passive prefix *di-* has been widely discussed (e.g. by Wolff (2001), Adelaar (2005), van den Berg (2004) and others), little has been said about the stages through which Indonesian-type languages developed a European-type passive construction. In this paper, we present data from 'missing link' varieties: i.e. Malayic varieties in which the European-type passive construction shows the remnants of the earlier, Philippine-type voice system, illustrating potential intermediate steps in the change.

These varieties, which include some dialects of Kerinci, have already developed a European-type passive, yet they exhibit unusual properties which are best understood as the remnants of a Philippine type passive. The 'demoted' agent in the *di-*passive construction exhibits behavior/properties typical crosslinguistically of arguments rather than adjuncts. For example, in the *di-*passive construction, the agent argument is syntactically obligatory, it must appear adjacent to the verb, it cannot appear in a by-phrase, and, as in the object voice construction, the verb exhibits selectional restrictions with regard to the agent.

Through comparison of the syntactic characteristics of these 'missing link' varieties, this paper develops an account of the historical changes which lead to the development of the mixed voice system in Indonesian-type languages.

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